No. 969
Friday
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● INSIDE: WHY GOD SHOULD RESIGN

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Left at Number Ten

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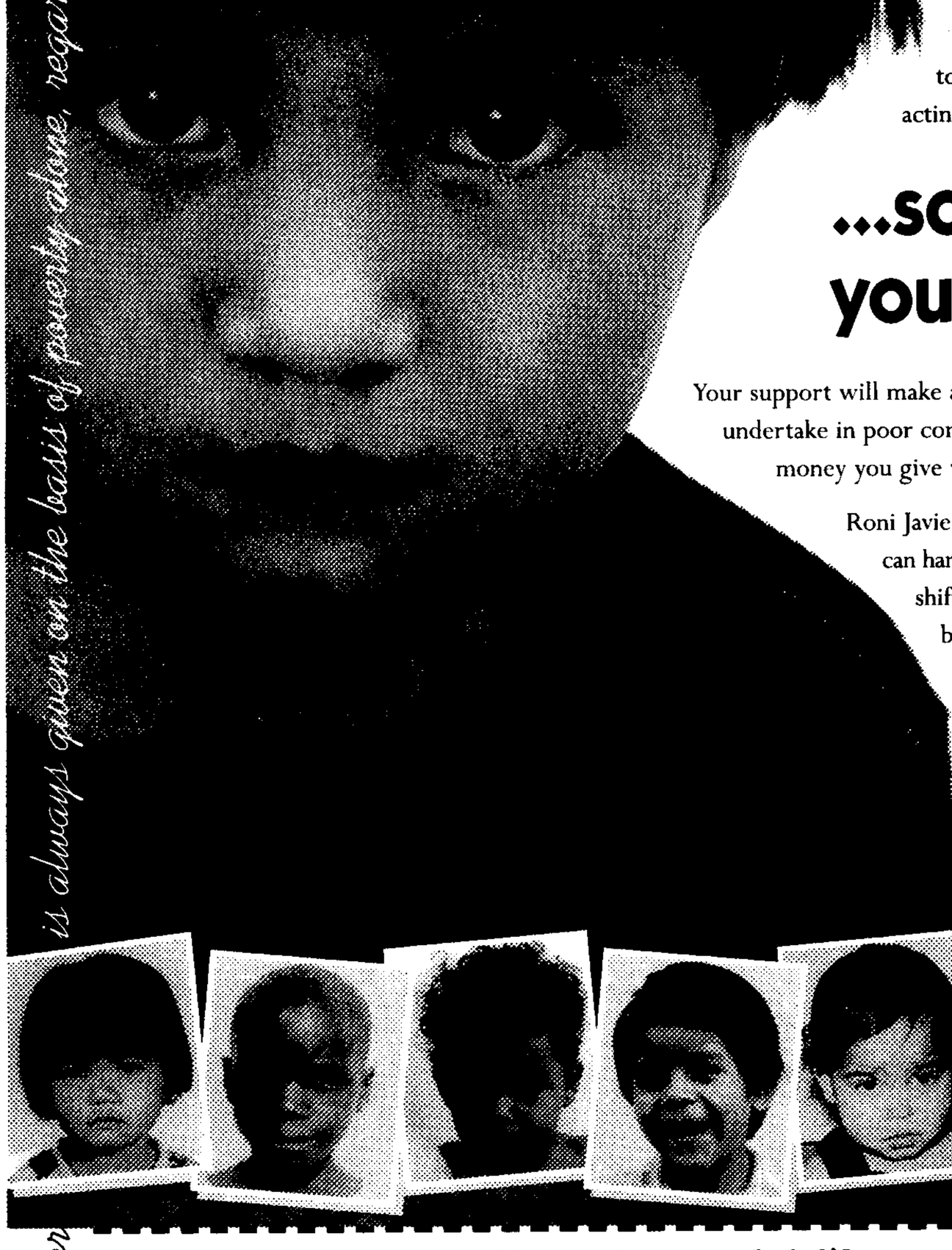
Christian Children's Fund of Great Britain is a humanitarian, non-denominational registered charity working with locally owned, long-term projects throughout the developing world and Eastern Europe to help living healthcare, education and eventual self-sufficiency to children and communities in need. Support is always given on the basis of poverty alone, regardless of race, sex or religion

By tonight, another 35,000 children will be lost through hunger, and disease...



It's almost unbelievable, yet every day 35,000 children in developing countries die from malnutrition and preventable diseases. That's more than 24 every minute!

The cause for most of this terrible suffering is poverty. Without enough food, clothing and medical care, let alone a proper education, the future for a child born in poverty is often tragically short. Many die from hunger and disease. Millions more face a daily struggle simply to survive.

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...so why do we ask you to help just one?

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Roni Javier pictured here, lives with his mother in the Honduras, in what can hardly be called a house. It has a straw roof, a dirt floor and a make-shift hearth for cooking. There is no sanitation and Roni has often been ill and undernourished. Now Roni has a sponsor we are able to work constantly to see to his health and development. The more sponsors we can find, the more children like Roni can be helped to a safer and brighter future.

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P.E 21

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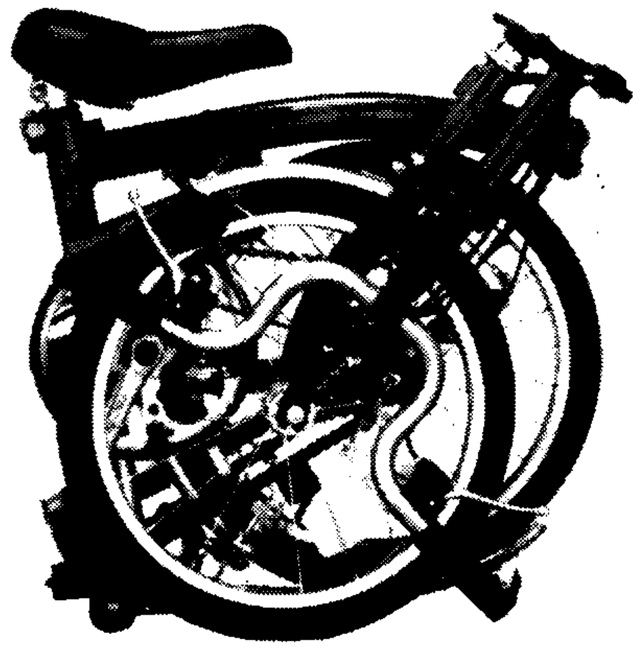

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THE QUEENS AWARD FOR EXPORT ACHIEVEMENT

Gnome

How Gnome Lensman Got *That* Royal Pic of the Millennium

IT was the picture they all wanted. Every Editor in Fleet Street was desperate to see it on his front page.

But only the Gnome's legendary snapper Sid Gozza (winner of the 1958 Neasden Press Awards Prix D'Or for his study of "Tom Tit Gets The Cream") came up with the goods.

Gozza, or "Our Sid", as he is known to no one, said "I have been waiting my whole career for this moment.

"I was just passing by the Ritz on my way home when I happened to spot 3000 photographers standing on ladders."

He continues, "My photojournalist's instincts went into overdrive. Sid, I thought, there's a picture here somewhere. I pulled out my Boots disposable camera and immediately started snapping away."

Below, the *Daily Gnome* is proud to reproduce Gozza's sensational picture which first appeared in the *Gnome* under the headline, "Watch The Birdie". Only the *Gnome* got this exclusive — all the other newspapers could offer was some bald man in black tie leaving a party with his missus.

Readers offer: If you would like a tea towel of Gozza's immortal masterpiece, send £78.99 at once to Gnome Gozza Offer, Unit 5, The Trading Estate, Isle of Man.

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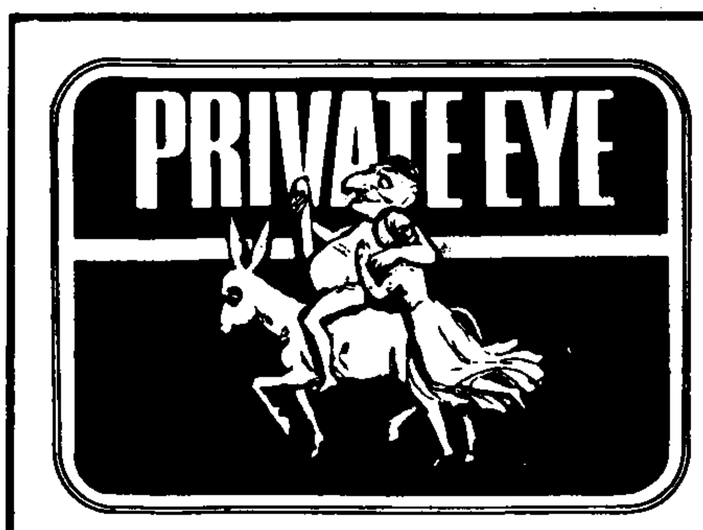


COLOUR SECTION

AT a time when "new" Labour is happily releasing republican and loyalist bombers and murderers from prison in Northern Ireland, its spooks are going around arresting those whose only crime is to *write* about security issues in the province.

Two unlikely men in the frame are Tony Geraghty, an author who pens reasonably favourable books about the SAS and other security services, and Rupert Murdoch, a publisher.

Their main crime was to publish, in a book called *The Irish War*, some confidential information about security computers in Northern Ireland which store secret information on a million people, two thirds of the population. But that was not all. Geraghty and his publisher, HarperCollins (prop: R. Murdoch), refused to cooperate with the notorious "D-notice committee" which cuts out so much vital information in the interests of national security.

The secretary of the committee, Rear Admiral David Pulvertaft, was most annoyed when he was not ushered in to "vet" the book in the normal way. On 3 December a host of Knackers from the ministry of defence police swooped on Geraghty's home and on the HarperCollins London offices.

Computers were thoroughly searched and the premises ransacked. Long interviews resulted in Geraghty being released on police bail, an increasingly popular device used by the authorities when they can't make up their mind whether or not to prefer charges.

Of course no Labour government worth its salt could serve a full term without at least one prosecution under the official secrets act. Wilson did Jonathan Aitken (not guilty); and Callaghan did Chris Aubrey, John Berry and Duncan Campbell of *Time Out* (not guilty). Under Tony Blair, the attorney-general will have to be consulted before any prosecution. How embarrassing in the year of "new" Labour's crown jewel — a freedom of information bill!

Geraghty and Murdoch might be uncomfortable in the dock together. Long years ago, when Murdoch moved all his London papers to Wapping, Geraghty refused to join his colleagues there. He preferred instead to abandon full-time journalism altogether.

● *More Blair 8*

WHATEVER has happened to former cabinet minister and arms salesman David Mellor?

His "Man of the People" column in the *People* on 24 January, headed THIS DISGUSTING FANATIC SHOULD SLING HIS HOOK, ranted: "Abu Hamza is a fanatic. He lost both his hands and an eye fighting with the Mujahideen in Afghanistan. You'd have thought that would have taught him the futility of extremism and terrorism but you would be wrong. From the safe haven that we have been daft enough to give him in London he has been spewing out his creed of hatred — venom directed against the British people, even though, shamefully, he was granted British citizenship in 1985."

Mellor asks his readers to "let me know what you think of this intolerant fanatic". Some of them may be tempted to ask which world leaders were the most fanatical supporters and financiers of the extremist and terrorist Mujahideen when Abu Hamza was fighting for them in Afghanistan.

Answer: The US under Ronald Reagan and Britain under Margaret Thatcher.

They might also dare to ask who was parliamentary under secretary at the home office which was "daft enough" so "shamefully" to grant British citizenship to Hamza in 1985.

Answer: David Mellor.

Perhaps this disgusting hypocrite should sling his own hook.

● *More HP Sauce 9*

THE boat has finally come in for Barry Cox. The PM has just appointed him deputy chairman of Channel 4.

A former neighbour and frequent dinner party guest of the Blair's when they all lived in north London, Cox made himself particularly helpful to Blair at the time of his bid for the leadership of the Labour party.

As a former head of features and current affairs at London Weekend Television, Cox developed lasting friendships with Sir John Birt, Sir Christopher Bland, Greg Dyke and Peter Mandelson, before moving on to become LWT's director of public affairs.

Cox's friendship with such pillars of the new establishment has served him well. So well that a couple of years ago Cherie Booth QC gave his son Buster Cox a second pupillage at her chambers.

● *More Media News 10*

MORE about Sergeant Gurpal Virdi, the Metropolitan police officer who last March arrested a couple of young thugs who had been involved in an attack on an Arab teenager.

The boy was stabbed so badly he almost died (see last *Eye*); and Sgt Virdi criticised his colleagues for not classifying the attack as racist. Not much later he was arrested and accused of sending racist mail from his police computer, which he contemptuously denied.

Sgt Virdi was released on police bail in April last year and has been suspended on full pay ever since. He was given a date when he would be told whether he would face charges — 25 January. The date has now been put off for another month — until 23 February. Apparently someone at the crown prosecution service is off sick.

● *More knackered Knackers 14*

THE prime minister's complaint to the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) about the *Mail on Sunday*'s report on his daughter's schooling will be treated just like any other complaint.

The fact that PCC chairman Lord Wakeham, a Tory lord, has just been picked by Tony Blair to sort out the Tories in the House of Lords is not in any way relevant.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"The Man Who Saved the Daily Mirror"
— *Daily Mirror* on Robert Maxwell, 6 November 1991.

"*Mirror* readers have reason to be grateful to him for history will laud David Montgomery as the man who rescued the *Mirror*."
— *Mirror*, 27 January 1999.

● *The Full Monty: Street of Shame 6*
● *Sex on TV: Square Eyes goes blind 10*
● *A false start trips UK Athletics 11*
● *Bad blood: how health scares work 12*
● *Shakespeare in... A Remarkable Coincidence? 25*
● *Branson: debt's the way he likes it 28*

Street Of Shame

EYE WAS MONTY'S TROUBLE

SO farewell then, David Montgomery, the latest tragic victim of the Curse of Gnome.

Monty fell under the curse on 1 September last year when he ordered the in-house solicitor at Mirror Group Newspapers, Martin Cruddace, to send us a pompous and threatening letter.

"My client, because of his position, accepts many of your insults and defamatory statements as part and parcel of being in the position that he occupies," Cruddace claimed. "Further, articles appearing in Street of Shame, generally are so inaccurate as to be laughable." Quite so: for several months Street of Shame had been making the obviously laughable suggestion that institutional shareholders at the Mirror Group were increasingly disenchanted with Rommel and might eventually force him out.

"However," Cruddace continued menacingly, "my client's patience has now been exhausted." The cause of his exhaustion was our allegation that the new Mirror Group chairman, Sir Victor Blank, had "expressed some worries" about Monty's pet project, the doomed relaunch of *Sporting Life*. Blank, we were assured, "did not and has not expressed any worries at all" about anything. Unless we promised to apologise at once, Monty would have "no alternative" but to issue a libel writ before the end of the week — and "these proceedings would include an unanswerable claim for exemplary damages". To prove his point, Cruddace quoted from a board minute which showed that Mirror Group directors had agreed that no "dummy of marketable quality" had yet been produced for *Sporting Life* and that the proposed launch last October might therefore have to be delayed (as it duly was, and still is).

Lord Gnome replied two days later. "Our initial response is one of some puzzlement," he wrote. "According to your own summary of the board minute, the directors agreed that the launch might have to be postponed and that further market-research was necessary. If that isn't evidence of 'worries' what is?"

His lordship was equally puzzled by the fearsome threat of "an unanswerable claim for exemplary damages". He pointed out to Monty's legal expert that such damages are very rare indeed. The current guidelines were established in an action brought by Elton John, where the judge directed that exemplary damages could be awarded only if a newspaper printed a story which it knew was untrue but lucrative. The publisher's reasoning, as summarised by the judge (and upheld by the court of appeal) must have gone as follows: "Well, it will help the circulation of our newspaper. He may sue, he may not. If he does not, so much the better. If he does we will try to settle and get out as quickly as we can. If we cannot do that and it goes to court we still think that the total cost to us, adding everything, damages and the legal costs, all the lot, will make it worth the gain for us to publish it. So we will go ahead." Since this was what had indeed happened with the Elton John story, he duly collected a large award; but we argued that it would be astonishing if Montgomery could prove that this was our state of mind when running an item about his *Sporting Life* fiasco in Street of Shame.

"You may recall the Elton John precedent," we added. "It is formally known as *John v. MGN Ltd (1997), QB 586.* The letters MGN in the case stand for Mirror Group Newspapers." And the lawyer in the case? Martin Cruddace.

We sent our letter on 3 September, and from that day to this have not had a writ — or even a simple reply — from the man whose patience was allegedly exhausted. Instead, just over four months later, Rommel was ousted from Mirror Group by an alliance of institutional shareholders and, er, Sir Victor Blank. Shome mishtake, shurely?

"NOT everybody hated the *Mirror* chief," Richard Holledge claimed during a lengthy hymn of praise to dear David Montgomery, published in the *Times* last Friday.

Holledge has good reason to be grateful, of course: he was employed by Monty at *Today*, the *Mirror* and the *Independent*, where his laughable attempts to show off his machismo earned him the nickname "Conan the Librarian".

But Holledge's tribute was not motivated by self-interest. Monty, he said, was solely responsible for ending the anarchy and extravagance of the old *Mirror*, where expenses were fiddled merrily, chums given shifts and "girlfriends paid handsomely for freelance work".

Not the most tactful example, perhaps. Only a year ago the *Eye* revealed a top-secret arrangement whereby the *Sunday Mirror* paid freelance hack Sharon Feinstein an annual retainer of more than £70,000 for just two features a month (or about £3,000 an article), at a time when the going rate for a two-page spread was well under £1,000 and editors were banned from spending more than £250 on any story without Monty's permission.

Other lavish fees — in return for providing celebrities' telephone numbers and suchlike — pushed Feinstein's earnings over £100,000, thus making her by far the best-paid journalist on the paper in spite of her low productivity.

As we pointed out in *Eye* 938, however, it was of course pure coincidence that Sharon Feinstein is an old girlfriend of David Montgomery and the mother of his first child.

Number crunchings

1.5 million
■ number of readers lost by the *Mirror* under David Montgomery's stewardship

£1.5 million
■ amount the sacked Montgomery is receiving as reward.

SINCE the recent arrival of gorgeous pouting Philippa Kennedy as editor, *UK Press Gazette* seems to have declared war on the *Express*.

In last week's issue there were no fewer than three items — including a thunderous editorial — denouncing a small diary paragraph from the *Express* which had the shocking bad taste to point out that *Sun* editor David Yelland is as bald as a billiard ball.

Does la Kennedy's onslaught against the *Express* have anything to do with the fact that she herself was "eased out" of Ludgate House a couple of years ago?

Of course not: she is simply a stickler for the highest ethical standards in journalism. So it must have been an entirely different Philippa Kennedy who in 1995 wrote a prurient and unauthorised biography of actress Jodie Foster — and then had to hand over damages and an apology to the US mag *Entertainment Weekly* from which she had lifted large chunks of the text without acknowledgement or permission.

An interview with Foster from *EW* had been incorporated into the book verbatim, making it look as if Kennedy herself had met and spoken to the actress. Her grovelling apology, which appeared on 30 August 1996, confessed to "inappropriate use" of the material. The magazine's attorney explained that a public humiliation was necessary because they "wanted the world to know" that Kennedy was a plagiarist. Apparently, however, this is no bar to editing the weekly trade journal which claims to represent all that's best in British journalism.

READERS of *UK Press Gazette*'s "Dog" diary column have been perplexed by a sudden rash of stories mentioning some PR girl or other called Sophie Rhys-Jones.

Prince Edward's fiancée got three mentions in the issue of 15 January and another on 22 January. The issue of 29 January is, mercifully, a Sophie-free zone. Do not expect this to last. The new editor of "Dog" since 15 January is former *Mirror* gossip columnist Garth Gibbs. By an amazing coincidence, Gibbs's "biography" of the lovely Sophie comes out in paperback later this month.

"At last we're an item — on pages 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9..."

JUST FANCY THAT!

1 "We act for his Royal Highness, the Prince of Hanover. Allegations have been made by some newspapers in other countries that His Royal Highness has been convicted by a court in Germany for allegedly assaulting a photographer and that he was fined 90,000 DM. Both of these allegations are untrue. His Royal Highness has neither been convicted nor fined for the sum alleged or any other sum by any court. We are instructed that should these allegations be published in your newspaper, His Royal Highness will take such steps as shall be necessary to correct these defamatory and damaging allegations. We reserve his Royal Highness's right to refer to this letter in respect of the calculation of damages."

— Letter sent to British newspapers on 5 August last year by R.G. Clinton, partner in Farrers.

2 "Prince Ernst August of Hanover was fined 15,000 marks (about £5,000) yesterday for breaking a cameraman's nose with an umbrella in January."

— Agency news item on an inside page of the *Daily Telegraph*, 12 December.

DON'T FANCY THAT!

His bovine bride-to-be, even when she began dating Prince Edward, looked irretrievably matronly... She probably appeals to the type of perv who finds Jill Dando sexy.

— Julie Burchill, *Mail on Sunday*, 10 Jan.

Jill Dando looks great in her slinky wraps on *Holiday*, and I think she should wear them on *Crimewatch* to liven up an otherwise dull show.

— Tony Parsons, ex-husband of Julie Burchill, *Mail on Sunday*, 10 Jan.

THE *Grauniad*'s wimmin's page runs a piece on the case of the hapless Michigan canoeist Timothy Boomer, who appears in court this week charged with "using obscenities" when he fell in a river.

Under a local anti-swearing law Boomer faces 90 days in prison if convicted. Hackette Dea Birkett fearlessly defends a person's right to cuss in an article peppered with, er, drats and blasts. "The real obscenity," she writes, is the "underlying assumption" that women will be shocked by swear words. An assumption that is shared, however, by acting *Grauniad* wimmin's editor Becky Gardiner, who censors some of the fruitier language from the copy. "You can have two shits," she tells Birkett sternly, "but not three."

THE Monet exhibition at the Royal Academy has won plaudits galore — except from the *Daily Telegraph*, which claimed somewhat incredibly that the RA would be given a run for its Monet by the smallscale show at the National Gallery featuring the far less famous Ingres.

Many punters, it predicted, would decide to avoid the crowds by visiting the National Gallery instead, and *Telegraph* art critic Richard Dorment dutifully added that he preferred Ingres to Monet anyway. What he forgot to mention was that the Ingres exhibition is sponsored by... the *Daily Telegraph*.

PERSONAL finance hacks are not a breed known for their ferocious independence and staunch refusal to accept freebies. Even so, a few eyebrows may be raised at the new issue of *In Your Interest*, a magazine for customers of Standard Life.

The tone is set by Diana Wright of the *Sunday Times*, who advises opening a "pooled" savings account. "To my knowledge only a few companies, of which Standard Life Bank is one, offer the appropriate facilities," she reveals.

Then comes an article by Margaret Stone, editor of *Money Mail*. "Standard Life Bank's public commitment to keeping its rates among the most competitive in the industry is a guarantee of its integrity," she gushes. A few pages later, in a hard-hitting interview, she describes Standard Life Bank's boss Jim Spowart as "one of the freshest, smartest and most dynamic visionaries in this intensely competitive and fast-moving industry".

Elsewhere in the magazine, Gavin Lumsden of the *Times* demonstrates his investigative skills by informing readers that Standard Life is a "financial services powerhouse" where "customers can be confident their money is safe". Ruth Sutherland, of the *Financial Mail on Sunday*, adds helpfully that "Standard Life Bank's business account is designed to be convenient".

Even Sutherland's *Mail on Sunday* colleague Jeff Prestridge, who fancies himself as the rottweiler of personal finance journalism, appears to have lost his bite. "Who would have thought," he asks, "that life assurance companies such as Standard Life would be wreaking such havoc in the banking and mortgage worlds by offering some of the best deals around?"

Indeed. And who would have thought that hacks could be so easily persuaded to sell their souls for a few hundred quid?

Er, everybody.

THE January edition of the department of trade and industry's *Gulf Spotlight* magazine, sent to businesses which trade in the Arabian peninsula, is unusually topical.

"Ask anyone what they know about Yemen," one article begins. "If they know anything at all it will be about dusty tribesmen kidnapping foreign travellers and showing them a good time, while waiting for the Yemen government to accede to their requests... And they are right. Yemen is still very primitive in many ways, but that is part of its character and charm."

All of which must have seemed very appropriate when it was written last year. But perhaps slightly less so when the magazine was delivered weeks after the latest British kidnap victim had been shown a good time in the charming manner of, er, being mown down in a hail of bullets.

In the past decade, the Birmingham Post has had five owners. The best has been the Mirror Group... Under Mirror Group ownership the Birmingham Post has prospered mightily.

Letter to the Guardian from
NIGEL HASTILOW
Editor, Birmingham Post

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

HACKWATCH

Boris Johnson

BORIS JOHNSON is the current holder of the Commentator of the Year award from *What The Papers Say*. On whom does the *Telegraph*'s political pundit model himself? Edmund Burke, Walter Bagehot or perhaps H.L. Mencken?

Er, no. "For some of us, the *Beano* has been highly influential in establishing our tastes," he revealed recently. "One might mention the interesting narrative techniques, literally drawing the reader in by inserting the 'Reader's voice', intensifying the drama with commentary on the lines of oo-er, crumbs, and so on." And so on indeed...

22 September 1998: Boris ponders the American president's difficulties. "Cor, did you see that episode of Clinton last night? Woar! Phwoar! It was the best so far... Didja see his face when they mentioned the cigar?"

12 October: Who is better, Patrick O'Brian or C. S. Forester? "After an interval of some years," Boris reveals, "I have risen early and read 100 pages of each, C.S. Forester and O'Brian; and I say now to the Hornblower-knockers: belay there, splice your futtocks, lads, and stand by to go about."

26 October: Boris interviews Philip Gould, Labour's focus group maestro. "Oh go on, Gould baby," he pleads. "Tell us the secret. Tell us the magic that has made you the most powerful and successful pollster in Britain." But Gould baby won't play. "So imagine my delight," Boris reports, "when I play back the tape that Gould has lent me to record our talk and find – egad – a recording of his most recent focus group."

4 November: "Come on, Gordon," Boris urges, as the chancellor delivers his autumn statement. "You used to be a hack yourself, you perishing jowl-wobbler. Give us something, anything, to dissect, if only for the sake of our puir wee bairns whose Ready Brek depends on their fathers having something to say."

16 November: Boris goes to see Uri Geller, who bends a spoon for him. "Gadzooks," the awestruck hack remarks.

18 November: Tony Blair has been exhorting British workers to step up productivity. Cue Boris's ingenious war-mag parody: "You there, Britisher! Get up off your fat backside... *Achtung!*... More paragraphs, please, Herr Johnson, *schnell*." What, no *Donner und Blitzen*?

23 November: Boris interviews gorgeous pouting biographer Amanda Foreman. "O Amanda, I say, as we huddle for warmth on a bench at Paddington station. Alack and fie for our generation!"

2 December: Boris, who has children at primary school in Islington, discovers that the local secondary schools are way down the league table. "Omigosh," he comments. "Oh hellkite."

6 December: Tony Blair's veto of a Euro-scheme to harmonise taxes will no doubt be presented by Alastair Campbell as a Thatcher-style triumph. But Boris has a few words of advice. "Leave it out, Alastair, me old mate. Just can it, Tony."

23 December: "What a stroke of genius by Robinson to add Mandelson, on the quiet, to his portfolio of obligation," Boris writes of the home-loan scandal. "Clever old Geoffrey. Bully for him!" (He also ventures a prediction: "Two things are certain. Robinson will walk the plank. Mandelson will survive." Later that morning Mandelson walks the plank. Egad!)

4 January 1998: In flawless stage-cockney, Boris sets the scene for an interview with Metropolitan police commissioner Sir Paul Condon. "Once upon a time in the East End, a brave policeman arrested some bad men. ' 'Ere,' said the baddies to the young sergeant, 'be good to yourself', and they offered him lots of money to let them off. Now, Sgt Condon had a wife and family; he had been raised in the seedier end of Bournemouth and attended a secondary modern school; he was strapped for cash. 'Go on,' said the drug dealers, and they riffled many thahsands of pahnds under his nose. 'Get the wife a titfer. Take the kids to Marbella.' But Paul Condon was having none of it. He fixed them with his gimlet eye. 'You're nicked, chummy,' he said, or words to that effect."

5 January: A thoughtful assessment of the resignation of Charlie Whelan. "Ay me! O lackaday. O hellkite."

6 January: Boris tries another comedy dialect. "Where, o where, is Gordon Bruin?" he muses. "Is he sitting in his constituency in Dunfermline tuin, drinking the bluid red wine? He isnae... Nae laddie."

11 January: The Bash Street Kid meets Lord Snooty, as Boris goes to interview millionaire novelist and journalist Robert Harris. "The other week he wrote a column in the *Sunday Times*, which might have been called My Friend Mandelson the Martyr," Boris recalls. "Pah, he said, pressing the smelling-salt-soaked hankie to his nose. He was appalled at the way dear Peter had been treated. For the first time, he felt ashamed of his profession. They were a bunch of 'skinheads'. 'Ere, said the rest of us, 'ow come you're calling us skinheads, Mr Fancypants? Think you're too good for us now, just cos Tony Blair's yer best mate?"

25 January: Boris interviews Gwynneth Flower, head of the government taskforce fighting the Y2K bug. "Come off it, Gwynneth," he joshes. "This bug business is pure millennialist angst, Bermuda triangle stuff, eh?"

27 January: Lord Wakeham is the latest of many Conservatives to accept a job from Tony Blair. "Here they are, the businessmen, the Liberals and, above all, the stars of the Tory firmament, tongues lolling for their goo' boy choc drops... He [Blair] welcomes little fishes in with gently smiling jaws." A puzzling image. "Gobble gobble gobble gobble," Boris adds helpfully, "munch munch munch."

More cow pie, anyone? Or was that the *Dandy*?

BEST HODDLE QUOTE...

Lord Ashley, who is deaf, said: "I have never heard anything so preposterous."

— Mirror

?@! a pullquote in Roman with rules above and blelow, four lines deep

Grauniad

THE Vatican has been very objective about the Pinochet case. Its daily paper, the *Observatore Romano*, has reported it only briefly and without comment, referring to Pinochet respectfully as "life senator".

There has been no reference to the telegram sent to Pinochet in 1993 and signed by the Pope's leading sidekick, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, which read as follows:

"Your Excellency, The Holy Father has been informed of the forthcoming family celebration to mark your 50th wedding anniversary and has asked me to send you and your distinguished spouse the pontifical autograph enclosed herewith as an expression of his particular benevolence.

"His Holiness cherishes moving memories of the meeting he had with the members of your family on the occasion of his extraordinary pastoral visit to Chile in 1987... He entrusts to the Lord your home and family where mutual love and trust in God's grace reign... I would like to take this opportunity of expressing once again the highest esteem in which I hold your Excellency."

The "pontifical autograph" signed by Pope John Paul II himself, bestows on the corrupt old dictator and his wife " a special apostolic blessing as a token of abundant divine graces".

EYE TOLD YOU SO!

"ZINC cadmium sulphide was the chemical sprayed all over North Wales, actually over the whole country... however, it does not cause lung and kidney disorders."

So wrote Rupert Cazalet, spin doctor at Porton Down, the MoD biological research institute, in a speedy rebuttal of an *Eye* story on chemical spraying of civilians in the 1950s and 60s (*Eyes* 965 and 966).

"My report says that people whose immune systems did not work, or work very well, could have been affected, including the very old, the young, those who have had aggressive chemotherapy, and those with certain genetic diseases. All these groups might have acquired lung infections."

So said Professor Brian Spratt, the independent microbiologist charged by the government with investigating the Porton Down spraying programme, in the *Sunday Telegraph* this week.

AS LABOUR looked set to win the 1997 election Paddy Ashdown and his two close allies Lib Dem allies Menzies "Ming" Campbell and Lord Richard Holme were secretly set to join the government until the scale of Labour's election victory made the plan redundant. Paddy rather fancied himself doling out dosh to schools as secretary of state for education, while Menzies would happily have settled for defence.

Later, as the remit of the cabinet's joint consultative committee — which included Paddy, Menzies and Richard — was extended beyond constitutional affairs to European defence policy, the plan seemed back on track. Key to the blossoming relationship was Downing Street policy unit staffer Roger Liddle, who once stood for the Liberal Democrats in the Fulham by election.

A former close colleague of Pantsdown, Liddle holds the European policy brief in Number 10 — and until the government's little local difficulties over the Christmas period, Liddle was intending to push the remit of the joint consultative committee further still -- to include monetary union, welfare reform and possibly eventual merger. But the shock resignation of Peter Mandelson dealt a very real blow to the plotters. With Labour's deputy leader John Prescott and the bulk of the parliamentary party in full cry, the plan was blown off course. with it went any hope of secretary of state Pantsdown — and, more importantly, any early promise to hold a referendum on proportional representation for the Commons.

Mindful of the louder voices of dissent in his own party which proclaimed happily that Paddy had been sold a pig in a poke, and ever mindful of some of the more exciting job possibilities in the gift of the prime minister, Ashdown made his momentous decision. And by ensuring that the leadership question will not be settled until September, he hoped to wreck the chances of the man both he and Tony Blair do not want to succeed: frontrunner Charles Kennedy.

MEANWHILE credulous hacks have faithfully recorded "the fact" that Tony Blair really wants Charles Kennedy to succeed Pantsdown. This is apparently because a) Kennedy is a "streetwise politician" — in other words prepared to play ball with Tony's grand designs; b) he is a former SDP MP before the party merged with the Liberal Democrats and has more in common with "new" Labour than sandal-toed old Liberals; and c) because Kennedy has been party to, and supportive of, closer relations.

Fact 1: Tony Blair would prefer anyone but Charles Kennedy.

Fact 2: This is why Liberal Democrats will probably vote for him. Fact 3: Kennedy fell about laughing upon hearing of Tony Blair's endorsement. For Pantsdown had already exiled him to agriculture and kept the sceptical Scotsman well away from the love-in with "new" Labour.

LORD ARCHER RHYMING SLANG

THE terrible drubbing inflicted on foreign office minister Derek Fatchett in John Pilger's recent ITV programme about East Timor was caused in part by the government's stubborn refusal to disclose basic information about the British export of arms to Indonesia.

Another gross example was the abject response of Fatchett's colleague Baroness Symons, parliamentary under secretary of state at the FO, to a simple question on 14 January by the Liberal Democrat peer Lord Alton. He asked: "What is the total value of the 60 new export licences granted to British firms selling arms to Indonesia since the last general election and which companies are involved."

Symons replied: "It would entail disproportionate cost to determine the total value of licenses granted since May 2 1997 for the export of military goods to Indonesia. Some licences are used only in part, while others may not be used at all."

This is all drivel. The value of the goods concerned are stated quite clearly by the arms firms when they apply for their export licences. The disclosure of those values would involve hardly any extra cost at all. The excuse that some licences are used only in part and others not at all has nothing to do with the question asked — the value of the licences.

As for the names of the companies involved, the baroness got round this by not mentioning it. Her real answer should have been: "We don't want to answer these questions. Please go away."

● Figures that *have* been released concerning East Timor include 50 people killed in December by the security forces, 12 more killed on Christmas Day by a youth militia and at least 18 murders since as refugees head for the mountains.

SCOTTISH Tories have been trying to squeeze some political capital out of the fact that Labour has asked a number of English companies for quotes for printing campaign material ahead of the elections to the Scottish parliament in May.

Scottish party chairman Raymond Robertson, former MP for Aberdeen South, has accused Labour of denying work to hard-pressed Scottish businesses.

Can these be the same Scottish Tories who, before the 1997 election, delivered thousands of copies of a patriotic newspaper titled *Fighting For The Union* to Scottish homes? It was printed in that fastness of Scottish nationalism, Exeter, and accompanied by a poster printed in, er, Dublin.

WITH elections for the Scottish parliament looming, now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of the Labour party by rubbishing the ScotNats.

Ten prominent and supposedly "neutral" businessmen duly obliged a couple of weeks ago by signing a letter in *Scotland on Sunday* expressing their fears about the job losses that would follow Scottish independence.

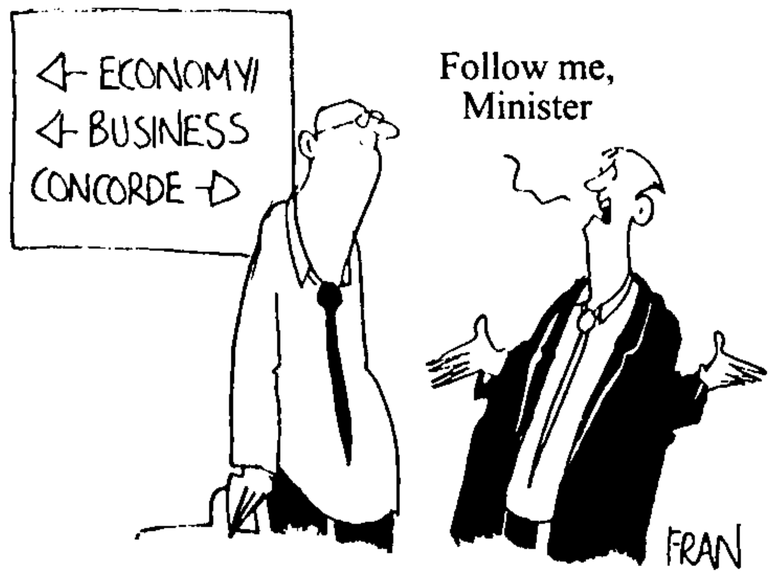
One signatory was Derek Reid, former chief executive of the Scottish Tourist Board. Strangely, *Scotland on Sunday* appeared to have forgotten its own revelation a few weeks earlier that he had held secret meetings with Labour's Helen Liddell to organise business support for a campaign against the SNP — which wants to abolish the Scottish Tourist Board.

Another neutral signatory, Ian Livingstone, made the mistake of signing in his capacity as chairman of the Lanarkshire Development Agency — a position he owes to the patronage of Her Majesty's government.

Yet another, John Boyle of Direct Holidays, was a Social Democrat candidate in the 1987 election, when he lent a private plane to David Owen. His largesse landed him in trouble over election expenses since he opened a full-time office and produced full-colour literature. The complaint against him was lodged by, er, the SNP.

Tom Hunter's concern about job losses is also rather surprising. When the former owner of Sports Division sold his company for several millions it was announced that the distribution centre would be closed with almost 1,000 redundancies. The campaign against the closure has been led by, er, the SNP. "New" Labour, however, refuses to say a word against him — possibly because he's a buddy of Scottish office minister Gus "Lord" Macdonald.

Gus has proved his admiration by appointing Tom as the head of a Scottish "pathfinder group" on business, along with yet another of the letter's signatories, Gerald Eagle.



The Third Way

ONCE again the Tory party has suffered embarrassment thanks to Gary Streeter.

Unveiled at the weekend as the "mole" who had told journalists that William Hague was planning a Night of the Long Knives in the shadow cabinet, with the old unelectable heads of Michael Howard, Gillian Shepherd et al destined to roll, Streeter was full of regret. "I made a mistake. I apologised. The matter is closed."

Such humility was sadly lacking last year when Streeter received a £1,000 fine from the solicitors' disciplinary tribunal for "conduct unbecoming". "My integrity was not impugned in any way. It was not a serious matter, but an error of judgement," he told reporters.

Even this, however, was more regret than he expressed over his association with Trevor Ivens, revealed in the *Eye* in 1996. Ivens was an electronics entrepreneur who was bankrupted when several of his businesses went spectacularly belly-up in the early 1990s. As well as serving as Ivens' solicitor, Streeter sat on the board of an off-the-shelf company with him, which bought out another of his failed ventures. Despite hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of grants, concessions and assistance from both the government and Plymouth council (on which Streeter sat), this company also crashed with half-million pound debts not long after Streeter resigned from the board.

"Streeter did the honourable thing," a senior Tory told the *Express* after this latest farrago. Makes a nice change.

THE onward march of "new" Labour's favourite Welsh businessman, Graham Hawker of Hyder, conquers new peaks each month.

Hawker started January with a CBE "for services to industry in Wales" and went on to clinch two crucial new government contracts: the first (with Kvaerner and Amey) to redevelop and maintain the Whitehall offices of the ministry of defence for the next 30 years; the second (with Laing and Tarmac) for a £100m A55 road scheme at Anglesey.

These followed close on Hyder's assault on the increasingly lucrative hospital computer market. In December it won the private finance initiative contract to run computing services in three West Midlands hospital trusts.

Hyder's decision to "go big" for NHS computer contracts follows the government's decision to "relax" the rules demanding government permission for IT purchases less than £20m (the previous limit was £1m). These rules were put in place to try to prevent computer scandals in the NHS such as the IBM disaster at Wessex or the ludicrous Read codes (see *Eyes passim*). But Hyder's own experience in computer contracts is not faultless. In 1996 Swalec (Hyder's electricity subsidiary) had to abandon CROESO, its "ground-breaking" scheme for computerised customer services, with losses of £30m.

How far he has come, this former humble auditor for the once publicly-owned Welsh Water! It was Hawker who shrewdly changed the name of the privatised water utility before launching Hyder on a takeover spree across the country. Hawker's Hyder is now building roads, hospitals and even schools — in October it became the "preferred bidder" to build and manage a 1,290-pupil state secondary school in Enfield. He has substantial contracts on the London underground and in sewage treatment in Northern Ireland. Ministers love him. He is a "new" Labour man to the core. He sits on the Welsh "new deal" task force — and the court of the Bank of England.

CLAIMS by the leaders of Sinn Fein and its loyalist counterparts that they have no idea who is behind the spate of gruesome "punishment" atrocities are just a bit surprising.

After all, if organised groups of men with guns are roaming Catholic areas late at night, shouldn't the IRA try to find out who they are in case they're members of the security forces in disguise? Similarly, loyalists might want to reassure themselves that their "community" members are not being maimed by Vatican sympathisers.

Northern Ireland secretary Mo Mowlam's assertion that there's "no evidence" to link specific terrorist groups to particular attacks is also somewhat disingenuous. Actually there is no published evidence... because the Royal Ulster Constabulary press office has stopped giving it out.

Meanwhile dissident members of Sinn Fein (increasingly in the majority) are watching their leaders' travel plans with interest. Tony Blair has set a 10 March deadline for "progress" at Stormont. By no means coincidentally this would enable his good friend Bill Clinton to allow Gerry Adams, Gary McMichael and David Ervine to visit the White House for the St Patrick's Day celebrations the following week. However, if none of the terrorist groups is going to hand over a single bullet, Blair's deadline will be missed, making it possible that even someone as desperate as Clinton will have to refuse entry visas.

SENIOR trade unionists have been lobbying the government to grant an MoD contract for a new radar system to the arms and electronic company Raytheon. Press reports claim that there were three bids — one from Raytheon and two others from "American" firms.

Strange, since Raytheon is itself an American-owned company. Nor do the unions' enthusiasm for the Raytheon bid say much for their spirit of international solidarity, since the company has an appalling industrial relations record in the States (see *Eyes passim*).

Still, Raytheon does have one thing going for it: last year, as also reported in the *Eye*, it shelled out more than £5,000 to become a Labour "sponsor".

'Backbiter'

IN THE TEAROOM

WILLIAM HAGUE is flying to Texas in ten days and his advisers are wrestling with the inevitable dilemma of the cowboy hat. Everyone remembers that the baseball cap was a disaster. But a stetson — wouldn't that speak of rugged individualism, downhome wisdom and log-cabin Conservative values? Wiser voices caution that "It ain't the hat, it's how you wear it."

It's all part of the Tory party's ongoing identity crisis. Hague is moseying off to the Lone Star state to share a can of Dr Pepper with George "Dubbya" Bush and talk about "compassionate conservatism". That's a philosophy that British Tories have been market-testing since the general election with a few solid results.

Last week the leadership was thrown into a tizz by a mischievous rumour got up by Gary Streeter, the foreign aid spokesman. "Blair is plotting a snap election... October 2000... to get himself off the euro hook.... Help! We don't have any policies to fight on!" Chief wonk Danny Finkelstein quickly calmed the panic by reminding the shadow cabinet that it was Tory policies that got them into this mess in the first place. All that's needed now are "themes and values". That's where compassionate conservatism comes in.

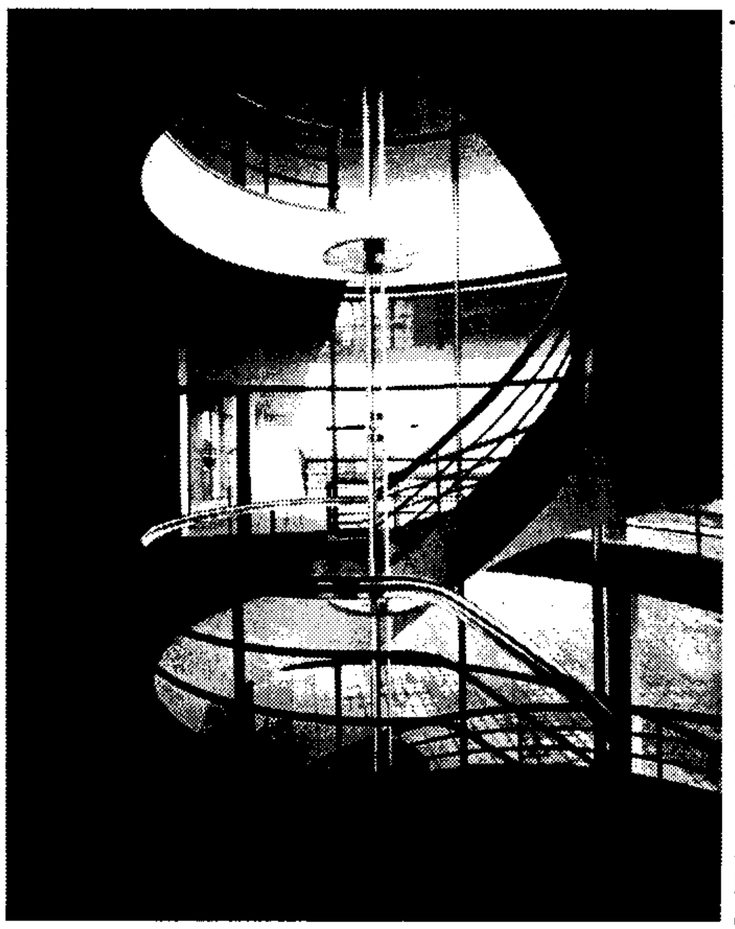
Meanwhile Hague has to cope wit the distress of close colleagues who feel under-promoted. Alan Duncan is fed up playing second fiddle to Ann Widdecombe. Mr Duncan's friends at the *Daily HelloSailorograph* have floated the highly plausible suggestion that John Redwood, Gillian Shepherd and Michael Howard would soon be making more room around the shadow cabinet table. Other colleagues took the opportunity to impress upon the leader that sacking Howard, while not making the Tories exactly electable at a stroke, would send a message that they were *serious* about pursuing reelection sometime in the next century. But Hague is a compassionate Conservative and still feels guilty about stiffing Howard in the leadership race.

'Urquhart'

NOOKS and CORNERS

MR BLAIR and "new" Labour are committed to modernising Britain. Yet this commitment doesn't seem to extend to looking after modern architecture — except, that is, when it means flinging hundreds of millions of pounds at the plastic tent in Greenwich or taking Milord Rogers of Riverside seriously.

What could be a finer symbol of (historical) modernity, of a new vision, of progress and unstuffiness, than the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill-on-Sea? This unlikely intrusion into a South Coast seaside resort is, quite simply, the finest Modern Movement building in Britain of the inter-war years. Furthermore, it is not a house for a rich client or for zoo animals — like so many famous Pioneers of the Modern Movement master-pieces — but a public building for entertainment, education and relaxation.



There was a café and restaurant, sun terraces and a thousand-seat theatre. It was the brainchild of a most unlikely mayor of Bexhill, Earl De La Warr — an unusually progressive peer (a perfect man for the "new" Labour House of Lords?) — and the design was won in competition in 1934 by Mendelsohn & Chermayeff, that is, by Erich Mendelsohn, one of the greatest modern architects of Weimar Germany, who had come to Britain to escape Nazism.

The building he designed — with its pioneering welded steel frame, elegant, streamlined and stylish — is therefore a symbol not just of modernity but also of the rejection of anti-semitism and all the conservative forces which were offended by the choice of a foreign Jewish architect.

With its spiral staircases, long horizontal balconies and clean lines, the Bexhill Pavilion is beautiful. Like many Modern Movement buildings, it has not weathered well in the English climate and unfortunate alterations have been made. But it still works, still provides a useful function in the town; and so it was planned to restore, modernise and extend the building. After negotiation with English Heritage, a clever and sympathetic scheme was produced by the architect John McAslan. It had the encouragement of Rother council, and was a flagship project to enhance and bring life into a rather staid and not at all wealthy resort.

Yet the arts lottery has just turned down the application for £16.5m to refurbish this internationally famous, grade I listed building. Instead, an insulting £120,000 was offered to "rescope" the project, yet in 1995 the arts lottery gave £500,000 to develop the restoration and modernisation proposals. This decision may reflect the Labour desire to shift lottery funding from capital projects to revenue funding — always excepting the glorious millennium dome, of course — yet already Rother council spends £1m a year on running the pavilion and the refurbishment is essential to its longterm future. At the moment, the Bexhill Pavilion is seriously at risk.

ANOTHER sign of "new" Labour's supportive attitude to new architecture is that Sasha Lubetkin — daughter of the great Berthold Lubetkin: he of the Penguin Pool — has just resigned as director of the Bristol Architecture Centre.

Why? Little money and uncertain funding to run it. So much for the support of Arts Council; so much for the arts lottery. But why worry? Just think of the fees Lord Riverside is getting for the exciting dome at Greenwich!

AND a last example of respect for modernity — although this time not by "new" Labour but by "new" Labour at prayer, that is the Church of England. The most famous post-war church building in Britain is Coventry cathedral — the last new building that the general public actually queued to see inside — which was designed by Sir Basil Spence.

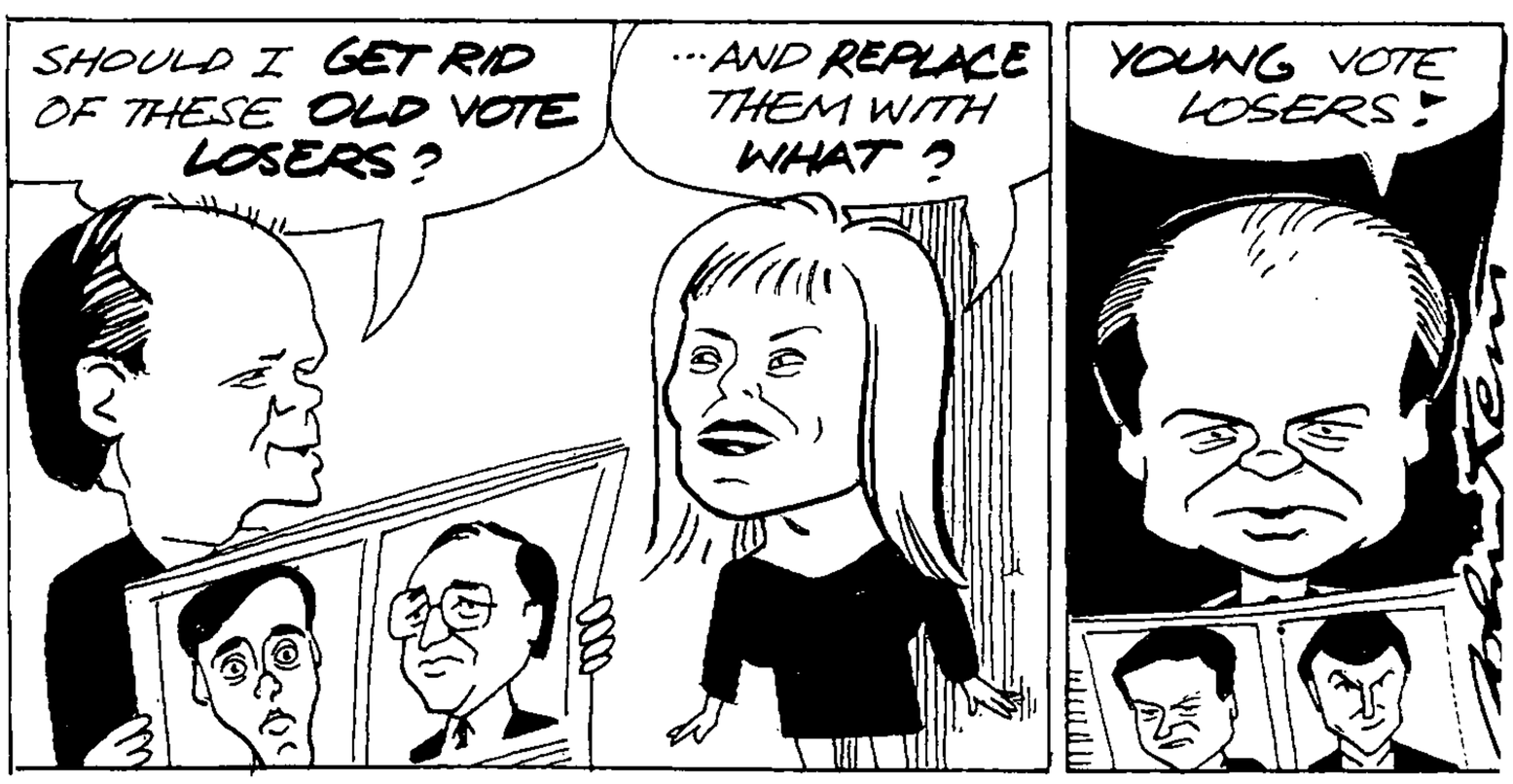
Near the cathedral, in the old Priory gardens, Spence also designed an international youth hostel, called John F. Kennedy House. The hostel was designed to encourage peace and reconciliation, and when he opened it in 1965 Willy Brandt, the future West German chancellor, said that "a new spirit has spread from Coventry. It is a spirit that strengthens confidence in the better qualities of the human being."

Now the Coventry cathedral authorities want to demolish the building as part of a land deal with the city council to facilitate the "Phoenix Initiative". This is a £40m city centre redevelopment which will include a new "Millennium Square" — yawn, yawn — on one side of which will be a new JFK House.

Yet there is nothing much wrong with the existing hostel. There are some problems, largely resulting from Spence having incorporated an old stable block into his structure, but the building is well maintained and liked by both staff and visitors. So why not incorporate it into the Phoenix Initiative plans rather than clear it away?

After all, the post-war buildings of Coventry symbolise the city's optimistic rebirth after the wartime destruction which was of such polemical significance for Britain fighting alone. Yet the council has already allowed the mutilation of the once-celebrated city centre shopping precinct. Nothing is sacred: certainly not recent history and least of all a decent and interesting building by a famous dead architect. I suppose the cathedral will go next — to be replaced by an exciting multi-faith plastic dome.

'Piloti'



ITV

Sex And The City (C4)
Paddington Green (BBC1)
Swingers — Faithful To You In My Fashion (ITV)
The Curious Dr Humpp (C4)

DAVID ELSTEIN has long been the self-appointed deep thinker among British television executives. It was Elstein who outlined the moral and technological questions arising from multi-channel future in the days when three channels was regarded as a large choice. He it was who lectured the BBC that public service television was possible without the licence fee.

Last week Elstein, as head of Channel 5, was to be heard applying his fabled brain to a new intellectual theme: the importance of sub-Scandinavian soft porn being available to the terrestrial television viewer.

This sad slump in subject-matter for the cathode-ray Plato resulted from the fact that he is currently had over a barrel (a manoeuvre, incidentally, recently featured heavily in C5's recent *Helsingborg Brewery Girls Are Thirsty For It*). Lady Howe of the Broadcasting Standards Council censured C5 for its late-night soft-porn offerings. But those juicy movies have been crucial to the struggling young channel's ratings and advertising revenue. The path of virtue would soon become a feeder-lane of the road to ruin. And so "old two brains" was forced to rationalise panting and stripping as an issue of intellectual freedom. Deep thinker became deep throat.

But Channel 5's most convincing defence would have been that it was simply applying more desperately a tactic which is rapidly becoming standard in terrestrial television. Rather as struggling newspapers have traditionally relaunched with a shocking survey of British sexual habits, so troubled television companies, in a financial Darwinism, use sex to survive.

BBC1's latest docu-soap **Paddington Green** devotes much of its action to — and derives almost all of its publicity from — a gender-swap prostitute, thus finally bringing to this over-exposed genre a fly-on-the-flies documentary. The latest ITV Tuesday documentary slot, having sucked up to the regulators with a John Pilger jeremiad the previous week, now offers **Swingers — Faithful To You In My Fashion**, a sleazy collection of

"It's to pick up digital TV"

shagging anecdotes from self-publicising adulterers given a thin covering of sociological analysis.

This is merely a more specifically sexual, co-educational version of that grim series *The Truth About Women*, in which Zoe Ball and other ladette celebs talked about pulling, which was last year's low-point in this slot. But it is Channel 4 — invented as a goody-goody liberal channel — which has most opportunistically used sex to stiffen flaccid ratings. In the last two years there have been two seasons of late-night erotic material and a recent series about British sexual behaviour.

At the moment, Saturday nights are hosting the Exploitica festival of tat-with-tit, last weekend's exhibition being **The Curious Dr Humpp**, a "cult erotic sci-fi drama", or, in other words, a tacky Argentinean film about a megalomaniac kidnapping girls and feeding them an aphrodisiac. It is the fact that Channel 4 gets away with this kind of programming which accounts for much of Elstein's anger. Such is the reservoir of goodwill established by the last-but-one new terrestrial network that *The Curious Dr Humpp* can be presented as a contribution to European social history and offbeat movie scholarship. Having gone dirty earlier, Channel 5's similar products invite only cynicism.

Channel 4's latest American import is a perfect example of the genre of the sordid with a liberal veneer which the channel has been pioneering since it began to sell its own advertising in the mid-90s. **Sex And The City**, an American sitcom, tries to have it both ways (a manoeuvre, incidentally, widely featured in C5's recent *Stockholm Lifeguards Meet Arthur And Martha*) by improbably being a male fantasy dressed up as a feminist tract.

Carrie Bradshaw (played by Sarah-Jessica Parker) is a Manhattan journalist who writes one of those men-are-bastards-but-marginally-better-than-dildos columns. She likes to describe this as an "anthropological survey of modern urban life", which is another way of saying that she gets to have sex with lots of different men. It is a measure of the cynicism of the series that it uses as a joke against the central character its own main sin, which is trying to pass off a series of shags as serious analysis.

Carrie's mission, lavishly illustrated, is to prove that "women can have sex like men" (ie, without commitment). In other words, this supposedly smart, sexy sitcom comes down to little more than *Manhattan Single Girls Are Hot For It*. Watching British television is increasingly like being a businessman in a cheap motel.

'Square Eyes'

TALES FROM THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

PHONEY pharaoh Mohamed Fayed was on top form during his recent appearance on GMTV.

There to promote the Di 'n' Dodi tribute record by George Benson (*Who he?*), he expanded on his conviction that MI6 was behind the Paris crash that killed the pair. Not only was driver Henry Paul "already an MI6 agent" (instead of a drunken Fayed employee), but several other MI6 agents were being investigated by the judge in Paris.

According to Fayed, one such agent was *Sunday Telegraph* editor Dominic Lawson, the man whom Fayed (and, it would seem, Fayed alone) apparently believes is behind all the "vicious attacks on me since the tragedy".

Lawson has been explicitly cleared by the government of any involvement with the security services, despite Fayed's attempts to keep the rumours running in *Punch* — a fact obviously not lost on the GMTV lawyers. The transcripts of the interview provided to journalists later that morning deleted Fayed's allegations about Lawson entirely.

Those who phoned to request a video of the show were sweetly told this would be no problem but that "you should realise we will be cutting out a couple of sentences". Will Fayed see this as another example of the media's conspiracy to thwart his search for the truth?

Fayed is now so desperate to hear the sound of his own ravings on the subject of Perfidious Albion that he has even resorted to appearing on morning phone-in programmes on Ireland's RTE radio. During his merry banter with presenter Marian Finnucane last week, Fayed twice made the extraordinary claim that he had saved bodyguard Trevor Rees-Jones's life and had looked after him for five years before being repaid with civil suits against himself and Harrods by the ingrate.

The phoney pharaoh signed off with threats to expand his business interests into Ireland, and a promise that he will visit the country soon — this only a few weeks after his similar charm offensive on the Scots. Has he perhaps heard that passports are more readily available in the Emerald Isle?

Meanwhile the Harrods boss has suffered a tragic setback in his campaign to stop Mercury Personal Communications from erecting a mast in Oxted Quarry, a mile from his Surrey property. Fayed demanded a judicial review of the planning consent granted by Tandridge district council in 1997, claiming the local authority had not considered the potential "health threats" from the mast. (Health and hygiene, as regular readers will know, are subjects on which the phoney pharaoh is almost as obsessive as the late Howard Hughes.) Alas, the high court has told him to fugg off.

MEDIA NEWS

JOHN BIRT's decision to cram all BBC radio and television journalists in one "bi-medial" unit in west London is at last recognised by BBC bosses as an unmitigated disaster — at least in private.

Head of news and future D-G hopeful Tony Hall is presiding over a furtive new plan to abandon "Shite City", as the new building is known, and move the whole news operation back into central London. This won't be cheap. Costs are estimated at around £2m — about what it cost to leave Broadcasting House in the first place.

This will do little to raise morale in news where all 17 TV producers from home current affairs have had their contracts terminated. Despite the programme proposals they successfully sold the network at the last offers round, Tony Hall simply does not have the money, he says, to make any of them. Home current affairs TV will now consist of four executive producers and four researchers who will generate programme ideas. Should any be commissioned, producers from outside will be hired to make them.

Fears that news of the move back into London will generate total mutiny among despairing hacks have led Hall to issue his most menacing secrecy order yet. Nobody but *nobody* must discover that the two options for the new slimmed down service include Bush House, home of what's left of BBC World Service, and the former ICI building in Whitehall.

FLAGS are flying at half-mast on ITN's Grays Inn Road HQ following the latest in a not-so-occasional series of on-air cock-ups at Channel 4 News. Viewers tuning in last Thursday were treated to the sight of a live programme in meltdown as the much-vaunted "digital" technology died on its arse.

What happened was that the newsroom computer system ENPS took exception to large volumes of stories being moved around in the running order (a not unreasonable demand on a live news show, one might think) and completely froze the autocue display. Trapped like a rabbit in the headlights, presenter Alex Thomson flailed among his scripts while seeking guidance from the programme editor, David Hannah. He got none.

After what seemed an eternity, he read a lead-in for a story about Indonesia — which the new "Quantel" computerised edit system then refused to disgorge. The programme limped through to the mercifully proximate commercial break, during which some semblance of order was restored.

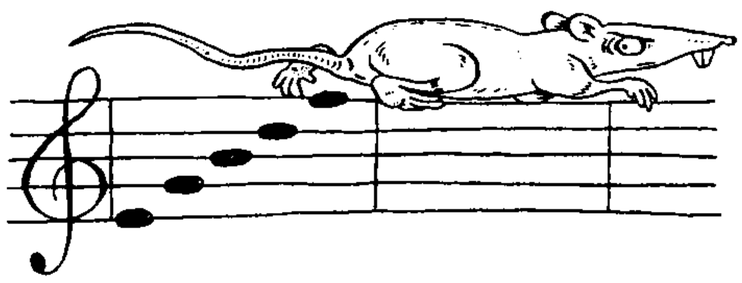
There are always winners and losers in such situations, of course. One man who has somehow emerged unscathed is David "Teflon" Hannah, in spite of creating the editorial mess that led to the hurried last-minute resequencing of the programme items on what had been a slow news day. Another beneficiary is co presenter Krishnan Guru-Murthy, imported from Channel 5 last year, who has made no secret of his ambition to front the show. He is now likely to get his wish, as the hapless Alex Thomson carries the can.

The immediate losers include nerdy C4 news supremo Jim Gray, who was so wholly seduced by the glitter of new technology that he forgot the point of it all. He received a two-hour bollocking the next day from Channel 4 News commissioners who were understandably vexed that their £18m investment had all the cachet of Watneys Pale Ale. He emerged ashen-faced and is looking for heads on poles to satisfy the channel that things will change.

CHRIS HORRIE and Adam Nathan's amusing chronicle of the shambolic goings-on at L!ve TV under David Montgomery and Kelvin MacKenzie omits to mention the station's ingenious solution to the understandable reluctance of more than a handful of genuine competitors to come forward to play in L!ve's celebrated topless darts show.

Given the difficulty of finding enough exhibitionist dimwits among the station's tiny band of viewers, and that professional "glamour" models would demand too much money to appear, someone had the bright idea of recruiting contestants by telephoning the numbers left by ambitious young ladies on cards in London telephone boxes.

MUSIC AND MUSICIANS



ENGLISH National Opera's new general director Nicholas Payne is puzzled by the mulishness of musicians. He cannot understand, despite launching a charm offensive, why his orchestra is unwilling to work for nothing.

Payne decided on a personal approach after an acrimonious orchestra committee meeting, attended by union officials and management, at which little was agreed — other than that old-Etonian Pain's behaviour was "obnoxious and irascible".

So he sidled down to a group of orchestra members tuning up in the pit and began: "I need to ask you a favour..." The problem, he explained, was that, following cancellation of a planned revival of *Mary Stewart* by Donizetti — because ENO had its sums wrong and would have gone over budget — there was a hole in the ENO calendar next June. Payne had had the brilliant idea of instead holding two gala "Highlights of Opera" nights. The soloists contracted for *Mary Stewart*, Sarah Connolly as Elizabeth and Susan Parry as Mary, could still be employed — and he was sure the orchestra would be happy to rally round.

Gala concerts, at which a wide selection of pieces are played, involve a lot of additional work for musicians. How much extra was Payne proposing to pay for the gala gigs, he was asked. Er, nothing. No deal, said the musicians.

The two sides are already at loggerheads over Payne's demands that musicians make themselves available for unspecified musical "workshops", again with no overtime. Mr Angry has accused the musicians of "restrictive practices". The words "strike" and "spring" have since been heard whistling down the draughty corridors of ENO.

THERE were raised eyebrows and beards in jazz circles when it was announced that Russell Davies was to present the whole of Radio 3's much trumpeted and massive 52-parter on the history of jazz, *Jazz Century*.

Would it be too much for just one not-very-qualified bearded trombonist? After only two programmes, the answer is yes.

In part two Davies went to great lengths to dismiss the legendary and much respected New Orleans clarinettist Albert Nicholas. Using a recording of *Ballin' the Jack* to illustrate his point, Davies banged on about Nicholas's inability to escape his "ragtime roots" and damned him outright for his delivery of "regular quavers".

Neither Davies nor producer David Perry, it seems, noticed that the record in question had been played at 45rpm — and not 33 and a third, its correct speed.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

Plugged In

Big Breakfast star Johnny Vaughan is poised to become the new chat show superstar of American TV... Fox TV is already understood to have offered mega bucks to secure his services.

The Sun (prop: R. Murdoch)
on Fox TV (prop: R. Murdoch)

It has been a joy to read *The Sun*'s "Would you sleep with Robin Cook?" coverage this week... This latest stunt found just the right blend of wit. I watched two people on the Tube turn to their *Suns* and laugh aloud."

MAGGIE BROWN
The Times

An occasional column devoted to cross-media plugs masquerading as news.

WORLD OF SPORT

THE current chaos in British athletics is the result of empire-building by sports minister Tony Banks, who in true old Labour style decided to nationalise the sport.

Through the Sports Council he created a self-nominated governing body, "UK Athletics", whose constitution has not yet been approved by the clubs and which is without legal authority. Consequently the Scottish sprinter Dougie Walker, who was reported last week to have failed a drugs test, is in the happy position that nobody can ban him.

Legally speaking the power to suspend athletes and enforce the rules still belongs to the British Athletic Federation — which went into receivership more than a year ago with huge debts. The BAF went bust just after hiring a former world record holder, David Moorcroft, as chief executive, and at Banks's prompting the Sports Council then agreed to underwrite his salary and all admin expenses up to the end of 1998 while a new body was set up.

Moorcroft duly spent last year leading British athletes to success on the track — while the Sports Council brooded and dithered. Warnings last July by the president of the English Amateur Athletics Association, Sir Arthur Gold, were brushed aside by Banks as coming from "the blazers".

With nothing achieved and time running out, an "election" was held for an organisation which didn't exist under rules which hadn't actually been approved. Former gold medallist David Hemery was named president of the four-man non-executive council. This self-appointed group then proclaimed itself the "governing body" of British athletics on 1 January 1999 — without any legal basis whatsoever.

The local clubs have still not seen the constitution of UK Athletics, which they must approve before it has any official status. But when Sir Arthur Gold and his colleagues obtained a leaked copy of the draft, they discovered (a) that there was no provision in it for disciplinary hearings of any kind, let alone for major drug cases; (b) there was no provision for the legal adoption of the constitution; and (c) that championships belonging to the English AAA had been promised to the BBC without the owners' consent.

And then came last week's news of the failed drugs test — which was announced on the very day UK Athletics held a press conference to launch itself. What was meant to be a tremendous PR extravaganza for Tony Banks and his chums, complete with an expensive logo and a fashion-parade to show off the swanky new British team-kit, swiftly turned into farce. David Moorcroft tried to put a brave face on things, boasting of a "new era" in British athletics whose keywords would be "unity, vision, passion, excellence and achievement". But "chaos, impotence and embarrassment" might be nearer the mark.

"Juan, there are two free black puddings here, but keep your mouth shut"

HOW HEALTH SCARES WORK

WHILE the NHS begs for more money to pay for nurses, Britain is committed to spending around £80m a year treating blood for transfusion, and as much as another £70m to buy foreign plasma for blood products — thanks to blood scares based on science that is as wobbly as a five year old on a bicycle.

The scares concern new variant Creuzfeld Jakob Disease (nvCJD), which is thought to be the human form of BSE, or "mad cow disease".

Since the 1960s researchers worldwide have tried — and failed — to find infectivity in blood in CJD-type diseases, including BSE. The notion that Blood is Bad only gained steam in December 1997 when Dr Adriano Aguzzi, a researcher at the University of Zurich and a member of SEAC, the UK government advisory committee on BSE, published in *Nature* that the killer "prion" thought by some to cause mad cow disease might be present in B lymphocytes of white blood cells. These have an integral function within the immune system — which is made up of all those offally organs also known to be affected by BSE.

Dr Aguzzi's warnings about blood, combined with news that three of the then 27 nvCJD victims had been blood donors, began a dizzy spending spree by the government. By May it had ruled that all plasma — a clear, batch-processed blood product used to treat haemophiliacs, burns victims and various immuno-deficiencies — must be imported from abroad at an estimated cost of £70m.

By July, UK had dived into an £80m "leuco-depletion" programme in which red blood for transfusion is stripped of the white cells. Announcing the move, health secretary Frank Dobson said: "We will do whatever we are advised to reduce the theoretical risk..."

His advisers were far from unanimous about this "theoretical risk". "From a position of no evidence that the agent occurred in blood, SEAC ran scared," says one SEAC member. "It was science by extrapolation. If, if, if... Of course, some members loved this. It will all help the grant proposals."

Theoretical risk provoked theoretical reactions. By 19 October last Canadian scientific advisers were considering banning blood donations from anyone who had visited the UK since 1980, a recommendation that, if enacted, would disqualify an estimated 40 percent of the Canadian donors.

By December the US food and drug administration (FDA) was entertaining identical prohibition. Appalled, the American Red Cross pointed out this would deplete the US supply by 10 percent and require a million new donors.

Just to make all this expensive drama exquisitely pointless, exactly a year after starting all the fuss, in December 1998 Dr "Blood is Bad" Aguzzi published in *Nature Medicine*, a sister mag to *Nature*, that B-lymphocytes from white blood cells *weren't* implicated after all. By doing so in a nominally different publication, though both are owned by Macmillan Magazines, he didn't have to observe classic scientific protocol and publish a correction in *Nature* about the turnaround.

'Flapdoodle'

"Keeping the conversation going when there's nothing in my head was a real challenge."

Chris Eubank (The Sun)

THE DYSLEXIA INSITUTE

Sevenoaks Chronicle

DOING THE ROUNDS

HEALTH secretary Frank Dobson's solution to the nursing crisis — give 5 percent of them an 11 percent pay rise — is likely to have little impact. Junior doctors aren't much happier either: 10 percent of new graduates drop out costing £80m a year.

This winter's bed crisis, meanwhile, is nothing new. The difference this year is that the hospitals themselves have changed tack. In the last years of the Tory government NHS staff were gagged and it was impossible to get cameras into hospitals to film the trolley queues. Now student nurses bemoan their lot on the front page of the *Mail*, alongside enough trolley shots to rewallpaper the department of health.

NHS staff and their unions are spinning for all their worth to paint an even glummer picture than normal. But it is unlikely the treasury will find any more money beyond raiding its waiting list fund.

● DID you know that anyone can call themselves a consultant in cosmetic surgery, open a clinic and perform surgery providing they don't claim to have a medical degree?

And a physiotherapist struck off by his or her regulatory body (the Register of the Council for the Professions Supplementary to Medicine) can open a private clinic that afternoon and practise as a... a physiotherapist.

Even though doctors in private practice fall within the remit of General Medical Council regulation, very few are ever called to account for misconduct. Which is perhaps why anyone, however slim, can obtain amphetamines for weight loss from doctors in private slimming clinics. And why wealthy addicts worried about their next fix can pop off to Harley Street and buy whatever they want. The doctor gains a huge fee for consultation and the pharmacist a big mark up on the prescription. All grossly unethical — and legal.

Even "routine" private practice is open to abuse. And a hint of how widespread that abuse may be was given last year by obstetrician Beverley Webb, chair of the medical advisory committee at Pinehill Hospital, Hitchin, who wrote in a letter to the *British Medical Journal*: "Unnecessary operations are a great problem, some being performed by doctors who have had only basic training in the techniques while they were passing through a specialty... What does one do if a colleague who is not an orthopaedic surgeon or hand surgeon operates on Dupytren's contractures, or a colleague who is not a plastic surgeon performs breast reductions, or a colleague who is not a gynaecologist inappropriately operates on genital prolapse? What do you do if a colleague always finds something to operate on no matter what the patient is referred with? And what do you say to the anaesthetist who always puts in a regional block as well as giving a general anaesthetic in order to bump up the fee?"

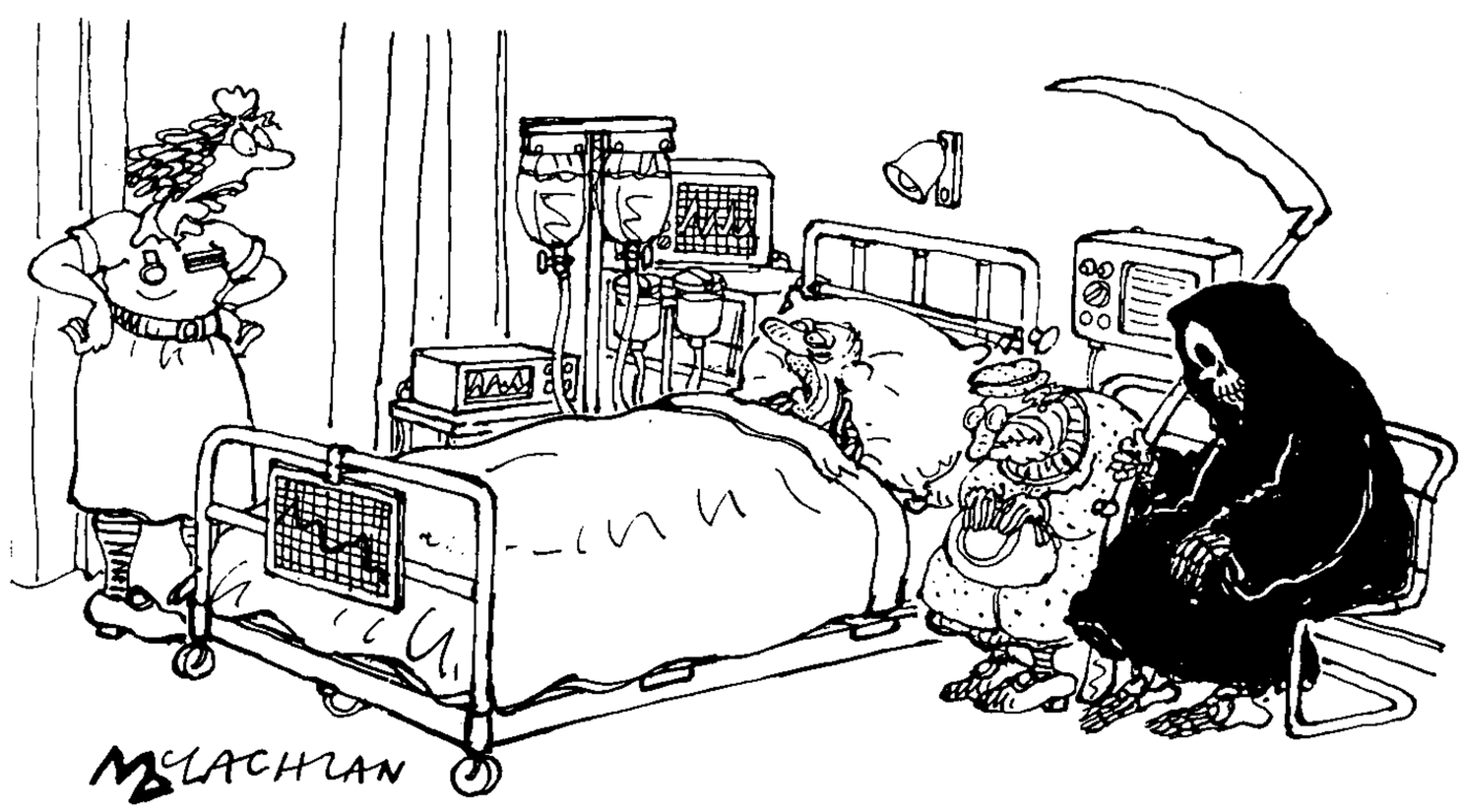
Webb also asked why the medical insurance companies have not policed these activities to reduce their own spending. "All of these examples," Webb wrote, "are observed every week by all of us who have our eyes open. Worse, they are obvious to our nursing and paramedical colleagues, who wonder why we are doing nothing to correct these anomalies..."

If a cock up occurs in private practice (increasingly common, says a report from Action for Victims of Medical Accidents), patients don't have recourse to the NHS complaints or compensation procedures.

As M.D. has pointed out, the advantages to patients of effective state registration and regulation are clear, so it is perhaps a shame the government tacked a clause on to its health services bill allowing the secretary of state to change regulatory bodies such as the GMC by order rather than by the more rigorous process of parliamentary debate and statute. Used responsibly, it makes sense; but it is clearly open to political abuse. That said, it is what goes on *outside* the remit of the regulatory bodies that patients need most protection from.

● M.D.'s exposure of the lack of state registration — despite constant pleas to the department of health — of clinical perfusionists, those who operate heart bypass machines (*Eye* 966), certainly rang bells with John Wood. "The Society of Perfusionists of Great Britain and Ireland has been pursuing state registration since the late 1970s... I find it incredulous that while medical laboratory scientific officers and nurses are required to be state registered, perfusionists are not... This was one factor in my decision to leave perfusion after seven years and study medicine. At least that profession is state registered."

M.D.



*"You know the rules, Mr Dotterill — you're only allowed **one** visitor at a time."*

DOWN ON THE FARM

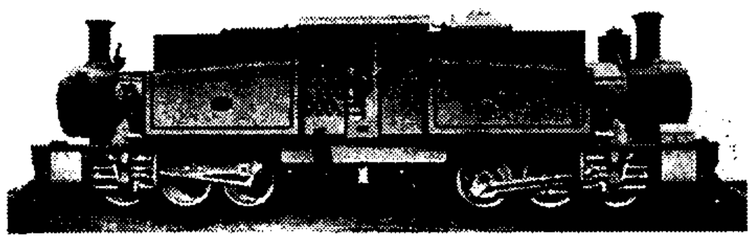
SO what, after four weeks of the prime time documentary *Against the Grain*, did Oliver Walston's controversial view of farming actually amount to?

Not a lot. Subsidies are ridiculous (when he said so for the 46th time, we began to get the message). And progress is desirable as well as inevitable (for Walston progress means technology, machinery and scale; bigger units; fewer people).

There, that didn't take long. Of course Walston is right: the CAP is absurd and obscene, and subsidies have proved a bad buy for British taxpayers. But Wally gave no clue as to *why* the present system evolved, and *why* it is a failure. For him farming is just another industry like shipbuilding, although with marvellous hypocrisy he *would* allow subsidies in the hills to maintain the landscape. Well, Cambridgeshire used to be nice too.

Wally's mix of obfuscation and bombast will have left most people baffled. An example was his parting comment on organic farming: "I just can't see it feeding the world." Apart from the fact that this is a mythical problem, Wally had already spent an entire programme climbing grain mountains and talking about oversupply.

'Gumboot'



SIGNAL FAILURES

How integrated transport works

ONE of the most popular elements in the integrated transport white paper, issued by transport supremo John Prescott last summer, was the promise of more freight being switched to the railways from our clogged-up roads. This was one idea to reduce road traffic without hitting motorists in the pocket.

Things looked promising. Railtrack had recently issued a 10-year plan stating: "We have taken the lead in developing and investing in the piggyback project" — a reference to the minor infrastructure works needed to allow 400,000 lorries a year to be carried on trains between Glasgow and London.

Prescott was adamant that his new Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) would be formed quickly, with the power to direct Railtrack to invest for more freight trains. Railfreight was growing after decades of decline and even road hauliers were being won over to the concept of integration.

Piggyback epitomises integrated transport in linking the activities of road and rail businesses for the good of society. The work needed for Glasgow to London piggyback — enlarging bridges and tunnels so lorries can travel through — was costed by Railtrack at under £100m, plus a similar sum to compensate passenger operators for disruption. This was a piffling amount compared to Railtrack's turnover (£1.29bn every six months) and considering the government might have covered more than half the cost.

But the project has now fallen apart. Railtrack has paraded a series of excuses, each one less plausible than the last. The chief reason is that Richard Branson regards the Glasgow to London line as his own playground — despite its use by numerous other train companies — and Railtrack is inclined to side with him as it stands to gain a slice of Virgin's profits after tilting trains are introduced. Railtrack would be happy just selling its limited route capacity to the highest bidder, Virgin in this case, and has no serious interest in expanding capacity to help solve the country's transport problems.

Such is Railtrack's apathy towards freight it spends just £5m of its own money each year on projects purely to benefit freight movement, while it claims to be "investing" £1.7bn a year in total. This is out of all proportion to the 10 percent of Railtrack's business that comes from freight. Railtrack's meagre investments to increase capacity are mainly for extra passenger trains, yet railfreight is growing faster than passenger business. The biggest railfreight firm has a blueprint of trebling the goods carried by train within 10 years (and is ahead of target so far) but this may hit the buffers as Railtrack is not making the necessary investment to ease bottlenecks.

Freight companies and customers are so exasperated they want the rail regulator to force Railtrack to provide access for piggyback trains by sending an outside company on to the tracks to do the work if needs be. But even this may not repair the damage done to the image of integrated transport. Road hauliers, sharply focused on costs and efficiency, can be forgiven for believing the railway is still a mire of bureaucracy, apathy, inconsistency and over-charging. They will not invest in trailers suitable for piggyback until they see the situation has changed.

And while Railtrack faffed around, what has the government done to help the credibility of integrated transport? Er, it left the promised legislation for the SRA out of the last queen's speech, then wheeled out plans for a shadow SRA, and has now decided the SRA can definitely be squeezed in after all — perhaps.

'Dr B. Ching'

Down on the Fish Farm

FORMER Scottish environment minister Lord Jamie Lindsay, frontman for the Scottish Salmon Growers' Association (SSGA), has been bending the ear of his old chum George "Why Me?" Thomson at the Scottish office (SO). He wants the SO to give his members "special dispensation" to circumvent planning regulations imposed on the industry because of the spread of the fish-killer disease, infectious salmon anaemia (ISA).

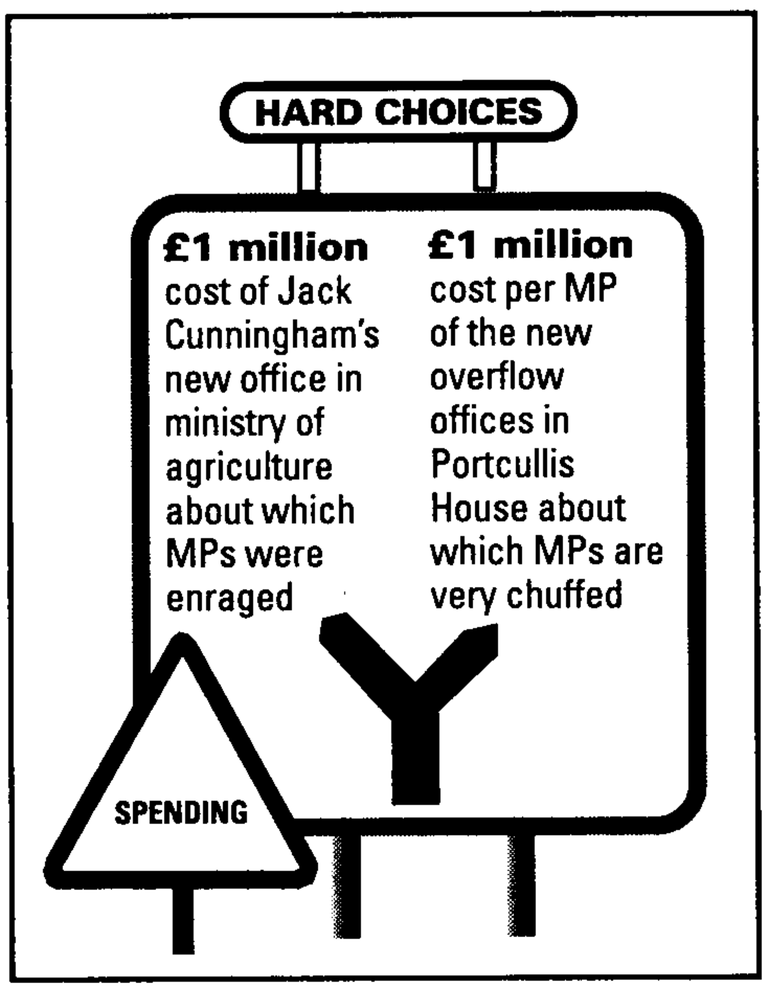
Fish farmers urgently need to plant out this season's smolts (immature salmon) in marine rearing cages. Their problem, given present legislation, is that they have no place to put them. Hundreds of thousands of sick fish from 11 sites confirmed with ISA have had to be slaughtered and their cages "fallowed" (left empty). And there are 15 further sites where ISA as been proven to be present and which could be "confirmed" at any moment.

The fish farmers want the SO to relax restrictions so they can use these sites; otherwise, they claim, jobs might be lost in areas of high unemployment. The industry is already shedding jobs and many once stable communities are suffering. If the SO will not allow the use of ISA-infected locations, the farmers argue that they must be allowed to open new sites nearby.

The SO should find it impossible to agree. It still claims it has no idea how ISA entered Scottish waters, nine months after the disease was identified in marine cages owned by Hydro Seafood GSP to the north of Fort William. Without this knowledge, were it to agree to the farmers' request it could be compounding the disaster and exposing itself to allegations of incompetence and negligence.

There is, however, a possible solution: if the SO can be persuaded to reduce the "seriousness" of ISA, from its present high-risk status on EU List 1 of notifiable acqaculture diseases, to a lesser risk list, perhaps fish farmers could be accommodated.

So will the SO do so? Given its previous record of unstinting support for the industry it "spawned", it is odds on that it will — regardless of the damage fish farming has done, and continues to do, to Scotland's marine environment and wild fish populations.


HARD CHOICES
£1 million
cost of Jack Cunningham's new office in ministry of agriculture about which MPs were enraged
£1 million
cost per MP of the new overflow offices in Portcullis House about which MPs are very chuffed
SPENDING

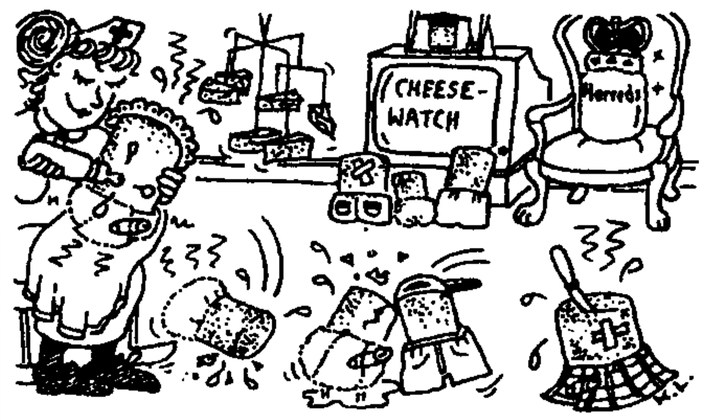
Pseuds Corner

VULLIAMY — December 15th to Laurence — TV Producer and Madeleine Mitchell — violinist, a daughter, Zerlina Evelyn Anna.

The Times

The Vessel — The image of a vessel has **been chosen to symbolise the intersection of people, knowledge and worlds.** As an icon it will unite the three fundamentals of our identity. People, coming together, shape each vessel's outline. As artefacts, vessels have always been reflective of the wisdom and knowledge of the societies from which they've come. And there will be many different types of vessels, their cultural diversity reflecting the distinctiveness of the many worlds in which we and our clients live and work. The vessels will be a consistent icon representing the fundamentals which underpin our brand.

From an internal PricewaterhouseCoopers memorandum concerning the firm's new "brand image"



Every Stilton is like an individual, a person. When you catch a cold, you become ill. If you get too hot you become dehydrated. If you are knocked about you become bruised. It is the same with Stilton cheeses so each cheese has to be treated like a child with love, care and attention all the way to maturity and beyond.

HOWARD LUCAS, Cheesemaker, Somerset Creameries press release

"Actually I felt as though he'd seen my vagina. It was terrifying." So Cressida Connolly describes, with characteristic frankness, her feelings on first showing her short stories to a publisher.

Observer

Newent Community School is undoubtedly one of the most successful Secondary Schools, by whatever success criteria one cares to set it against. The School is oversubscribed by choice in all of its Years, has an engaging, endeavouring and achieving student body, enfranchised and empowered parents, a dedicated and high performing staff, first class resources (physical and curriculum), a very healthy budget performance and an informed, challenging and supportive Governing Body. Newent is looking for a Headteacher with vision who will take the school forward by honouring the past for its achievement and successes, by challenging the status quo and comfort zone of the present, and by setting real targets for the future which are obtainable and significant. This agenda for action, in concert with the whole School community, will ensure that Newent will continue to flourish.

Advertisement

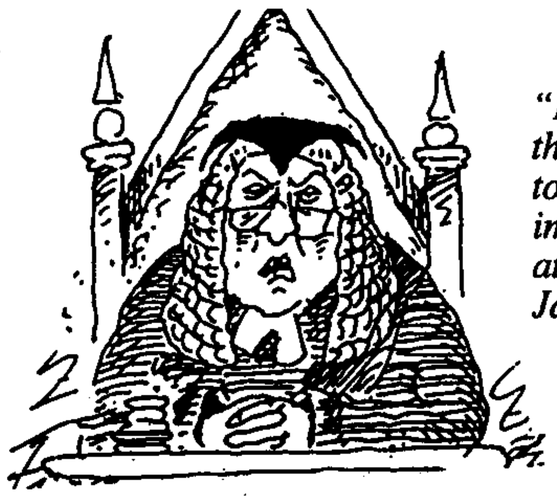
His haystack pictures of the 1890s were about the livelihood of the peasantry in rural France, and it is quite possible that the paintings of his garden are about life and death...

...It's interesting that Monet never attempted a really tall shape for a painting, though he extended canvas size lengthwards with an audacity that, even today, seems remakable. I surmise that long pictures felt more appropriate because their format reminded Monet of death and the long processions of its rites of passage.

TIM HILTON on Monet
Independent on Sunday

CONTRIBUTORS: Jeremy and Ruth Parsons; Anon; Janice James; Jonathan Sargent; APR; Rachael Spence.

£10 paid for entries



"I sentence the prisoner to death by imprisonment at Doncaster Jail"

POLICE 5

THE *Eye* has received the following bizarre story about a detective sergeant in the Merseyside police.

The sergeant, accompanied by a woman detective constable, attended an identity parade to identify a suspect for a horrific assault on two Asians at an Indian take-away. The parade was cancelled (the interpreter didn't turn up) and the two officers escorted the suspect home. On the way, the sergeant expressed some outspoken views about Asians in Britain, and advised the suspect that the assailant in the restaurant would have been better advised to have used a baseball bat.

When the woman detective protested about his language, the sergeant gave vent to his opinion about women police officers — an opinion which was far from civilised or friendly.

The *Eye* asked Merseyside police about this matter, and got the following revealing reply:

"I can say that we have received a complaint from two serving officers regarding racist and sexist remarks and the complaints are currently being investigated. We are unable to comment further." The spokesman asked the Eye not to publish the name of the sergeant at least until after the investigation is complete.

THE nice ladies seconded from West Sussex county council who run the library service at Ford open prison occasionally forget that they are dealing with a bunch of conmen (in this case the prisoners, not the staff or home office).

Jobs in the library are much prized and the matrons usually employ white-collar fraudsters who might not survive labouring outside (*brrrr* — horrible!) with rough blue-collar types. The library provides the "red bands" (trusties) who work there with warmth, coffee, biscuits and free newspapers — and the librarian bakes a cake on their birthdays. All very agreeable.

Criminals are an ungrateful lot, however. Recently the prison authorities discovered that the red bands in the library had been over-ordering newspapers and magazines and "selling" them to other inmates in exchange for phone cards (standard prison currency). The scam worked because the librarian innocently took details of prisoners' newspaper orders and payments on trust from the red bands and then sent on the figures for payment to Ford's finance officer without checking them. It took weeks for Ford's newsagent to realise he was delivering far more papers to the prison than he was being paid for — the gap amounting to several hundred pounds. Big money in a place where inmates are paid £7 a week.

There was something of a clampdown after the authorities uncovered the scam. The red bands' Mr Big, John Sweeney, got the sack — which was a shame, as he had been running his business from the library's computer. Several other red bands had their wings clipped. The librarian certainly had a rude awakening. She has sworn never to trust an inmate again.

DIANABALLS

Princess Diana continues to spread love to ordinary people from beyond the grave, new research into dreams has suggested... Whereas most dreams about the recently deceased are intensely harrowing, psychologist Jennifer Parker found those about Diana were comforting... "There was far less aggression and when it did occur it was verbal and directed towards others, often in order to protect Diana. The emotions were very comforting and had more religious and spiritual content than typical dreams."

Western Daily Press

Letters

Private Eye

A real wife saver

Sir,

I don't know Chris Adams socially but he has twice probably saved my wife's life in the operating theatre. If anyone merits a million a year (and I'm not saying they do), I would rather see it go to a top surgeon than to some foul-mouthed slob with an electric guitar and a pushy manager — or even to those ever-uglier skeletal children on the catwalk.

As regards the charge for his court work, remember the famous story about the plumber who fixed a boiler with one blow of his hammer and presented a bill for £100? Asked to provide a breakdown of this, he replied: "To hitting boiler, 25p. To knowing where to hit, £99.75p."

As for the EYE, are you sure you are still hitting the right targets?

Yours sincerely,
NAME & ADDRESS SUPPLIED.

LUVVIES

What is your idea of perfect happiness?
To recognize and be recognized.

What is your favourite journey?
A spiritual one. Or through a great book — or through a great composer or through a great film or theatre experience.

What is your favourite occupation?
Creating.

LIV ULLMANN, Vanity Fair

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

Gillingham: the truth

Sir,

I am writing with regard to the Street of Shame story on page 6 of issue 968 which stated that "Fulham supporter Matthew Fox was stabbed to death during a fight involving 50 rival fans outside the Southern Bell pub".

I am a primary school teacher and have supported Gillingham FC for more than 30 years. My daughter (aged 12) and I are season ticket holders and attended the home games against Fulham both last season and this season.

Although it is true that Matthew Fox sadly died after the Fulham game last season, he was not stabbed but was knocked down by a punch, for which his assailant was sentenced to four years for manslaughter. He died at the end of an alleyway outside the Priestfield Road exit from the ground, which is nowhere near the Southern Bell pub. He did not die as a result of a fight involving 50 rival fans.

On page 7 of issue 968 you recommend that the Sunday Mirror "check its facts". The words "pot", "kettle" and "black" come to mind.

Yours sincerely,
NAME AND ADDRESS SUPPLIED.

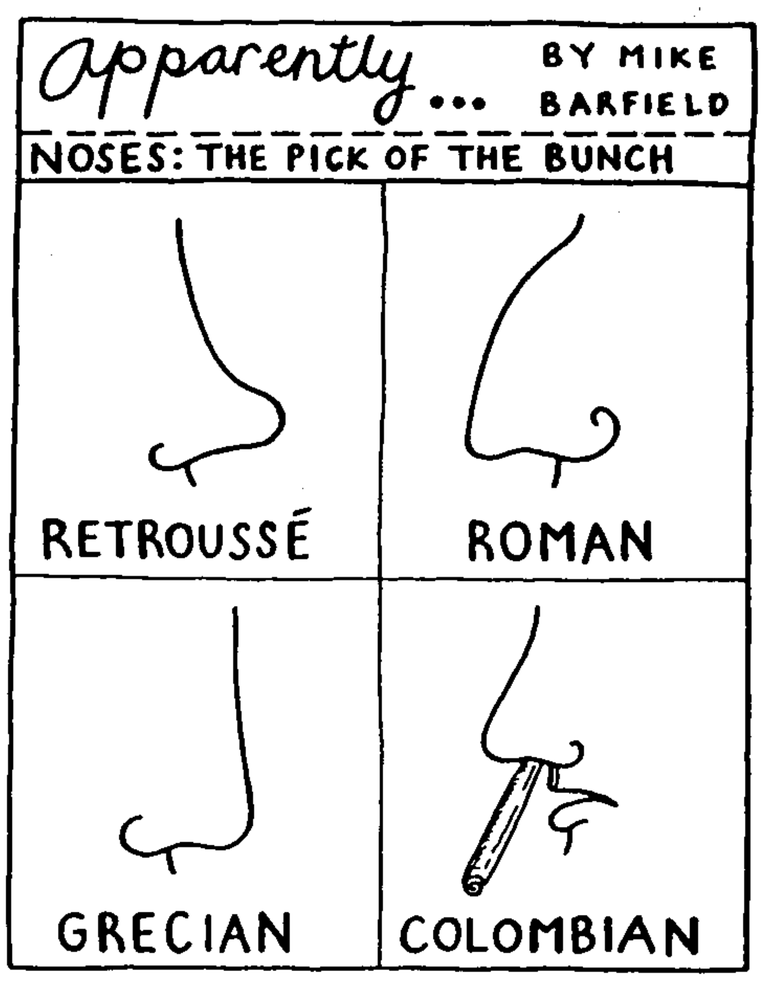
I am both disgusted and enraged that such complete lies were published. The case received nationwide attention, and so I find it surprising that your researchers were unable to unearth the correct information.

During the court case CCTV evidence was used, in which rumours that Matthew Fox was stabbed to death were finally put to rest. It was shown that he died after he was punched in the head, and fell to the ground, hitting his head on the kerb. No knife was involved. Furthermore only ONE rival "supporter" was involved — Barry Cullen. Fox did not die outside a pub; he passed away in an alley. For your report to claim that there was a fight involving 50 fans is quite ludicrous.

Yours faithfully,
IAN HATCHER,

via email.

● ***As numerous readers have pointed out, we got this badly wrong and we're sorry. We regret any distress caused. Ed.***



The Di Today

Sir,

Your latest piece on me is the usual pack of lies and fantasy.

1. Mohammed Al Fayed did not introduce me to Richard Tomlinson. Perhaps you should try reading your own letters page. As I explained previously, I have had no contact with Mr Al Fayed since he was interviewed for the ITV programme last May.

2. I have no conspiracy thesis linking MI6, Dominic Lawson, his wife and her 83-year-old father. I did not even know she had a father. Further, I know that Tomlinson does not hold this view.

3. The Mark Thatcher programme is not "languishing on the shelf". In fact, it's still in production. Channel 4 has been re-designing their biography series and expect to transmit it later this year.

Maybe I am being a bit paranoid, but the regularity of the rubbish you write about me is beginning to seem like a vendetta. Why don't you ever phone me to check your "facts"?

Yours sincerely,
RICHARD BELFIELD,
Producer, Diana — Secrets Behind The Crash.

A plague in their house

Sir,

Throughout the recent correspondence about the defence establishment at Porton Down, one question has lingered at the back of my mind. If, as self-described Porton Down spin doctor Rupert Cazalet claims, the establishment ceased to be the UK's biological warfare centre back in 1956, how does he explain the death in a Salisbury hospital in 1962 of Dr Geoffrey Bacon?

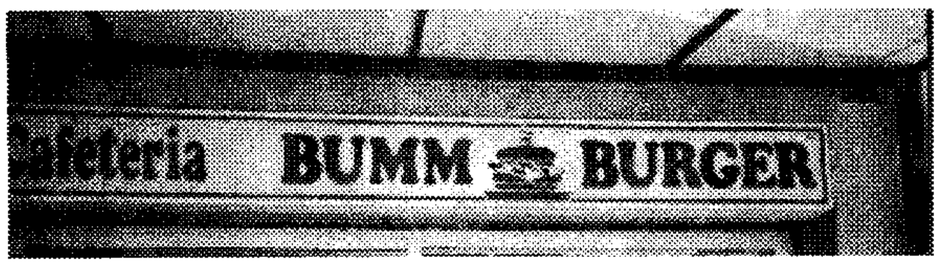
The unfortunate Dr Bacon died from Black Death. This is a fairly uncommon complaint in 20th Century Britain, and cynics might suppose it was an occupational hazard connected with his job as a scientist at, er, Porton Down.

Yours cursed with a long memory,
TONY HETHERINGTON,

Via e-mail.

"I've got halitosis, you know..."

I-SPY



***Ibiza** (S. Browning)*

Penang, Malaysia
(Mrs J. Gascoigne)

£10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Fair shares

Sir,

The usually excellent Slicker is wrong when he says that only the share tipsters on the EXPRESS managed to outperform the FTSE100 and FT All Share indices in 1998 (EYE 968).

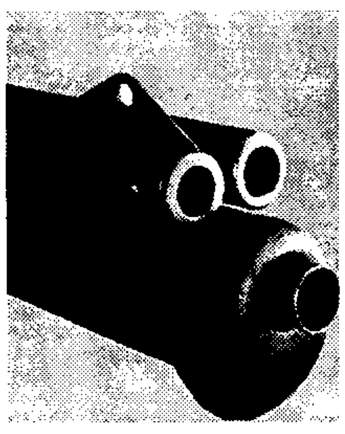
My six stock selections for the GUARDIAN's financial pages in 1998, made before I left to join FINANCIAL MAIL ON SUNDAY, achieved a 47 percent average increase during the year — with all but one comfortably outperforming the FTSE-100.

Needless to say, such clairvoyance has only benefited GUARDIAN readers, while I remain a frequently penniless hack.

Best wishes,
IAN KING,

London N16.

Lookalike



Dog

Gun

Sir,

I wonder if any of your readers have been struck by the similarity between the cheese and cracker loving plasticine dog Gromit and the death and destruction-dealing Neostead shotgun?

Yours faithfully ,
BRUCE DAVIDSON,

Swindon, Wilts.

Gunning for trouble

Sir,

In EYE 968 your comparison between the numbers of legally-held guns handed in after the recent legislation banning them and the numbers of illegal guns handed in since the Northern Ireland so-called peace process began was wrong.

Far from being no guns handed in, the LVF handed over the grand total of nine guns and 300 rounds of ammunition to be decommissioned at the end of last year.

Fortunately I shall not be cancelling my subscription as a result of this glaring inaccuracy.

Yours,
DR DUNCAN CAMPBELL,

Via e-mail.

Smack on wrist

Sir,

Your Smackwatch piece (EYE 968) revealed not only that the MIRROR's "dope reporter" Colin Wills got his facts wrong about the non-existent 8-year-old junkie in Goole. The "mists of the Humber" must really have got into Wills' brain, because Goole is on the River Ouse. The River Humber is about 15 miles away.

Yours faithfully,
RAY ARNOLD,

Via email.

Taking the piss

Sir,

Whilst in Harrods on Saturday, my son, aged 4, asked to go to the loo. We were directed to the "luxury washrooms" with the notorious fee of one pound per pee.

The notice outside stated that there was no charge for young children accompanied by an adult. I told the doorwoman that my son needed to use the loo, and she glared at me and said "Are you going to go?" I answered that I would take him in. She repeated the question, and I again replied that I would escort my son. She then asked me a third time, in barely suppressed rage, "Are you going to go?", at which point it dawned on me that I was indeed being asked in full view of other customers whether I was going to urinate in Harrods' "luxury washroom" whilst looking after my son.

I thought you might enjoy this tale of how Harrods' staff treat their customers.

Yours sincerely,
KATIE LOGAN,

Epsom, Surrey.

PS: I was not sporting a nose ring and ripped jeans at the time, nor had I laughed openly at the Diana and Dodi memorial.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Forest 1-0 down... this will be their 19th consecutive game without a win, unless they can conjure up an equaliser."
ALAN GREEN, Radio 5 Live
(Angus McDonald)

"Man United now have a home tie at Fulham."
Commentator, Granada Tonight
(T.B. Hannaway)

"Zero-zero's a big score sometimes."
RON ATKINSON
(Ken Pyne)

"We're in a no win situation, except if we win we'll go through to the next round."
GRAHAM LE SAUX, Radio 5 Live
(M. Chadburn)

"A rather pedantic pace to this match so far."
JOHN BARNES, Radio Scotland
(Andy Macleod)

Letter from **Quito**

from Our Own Correspondent

STRANGE how eerily the condition of the active volcano Gua Gua Pichincha, which overlooks the city of Quito, seems to mirror the current "interesting times" in Ecuadorean politics.

Ecuador may be one of the smaller countries in South America, but in the political and economic upheaval division we punch well above our weight. A recent survey by Berlin-based Transparency International revealed that we are believed to be one of the 10 most corrupt countries it examined, coming joint 77th out of 85 in the perceived-honesty stakes.

President Jamil Mahuad and his government, elected last summer, believe they can turn Pichincha's grumblings to their advantage and use the volcano to calm the masses: after all, nobody wants to take to the streets if they run the risk of being embalmed in hot ash.

Whenever the political temperature rises, a new report curiously seems to emerge that the volcano — which has been threatening eruption for a couple of months — is looking angrier. And so the protests against Jamil's various "sage" decisions have conveniently remained within controllable limits... until recently.

Here in Ecuador the title of president has more often than not been synonymous with "champion embezzler". Jamil was elected as a clean pair of hands following a long succession of such abuse. One of his predecessors was Abdala Bucarám Ortiz, known universally (and not through affection) as "El Loco". The karaoke-crooning Bucarám, once photographed with not one but two Argentinian prostitutes, vanished after a tiny hiccup which led to our apparently having three presidents at once for a few days in 1997, and took with him the small matter of hundreds of millions of state dollars.

However, in the last five months six major banks have gone belly-up. Instead of forcing them to liquidate their assets, Jamil has kindly supported them with money from the Central Bank — money which rightfully belongs to the Ecuadorean people; money, of which there seems to be surprisingly little. By a curious coincidence, his election campaign had been financially supported by precisely these banks.

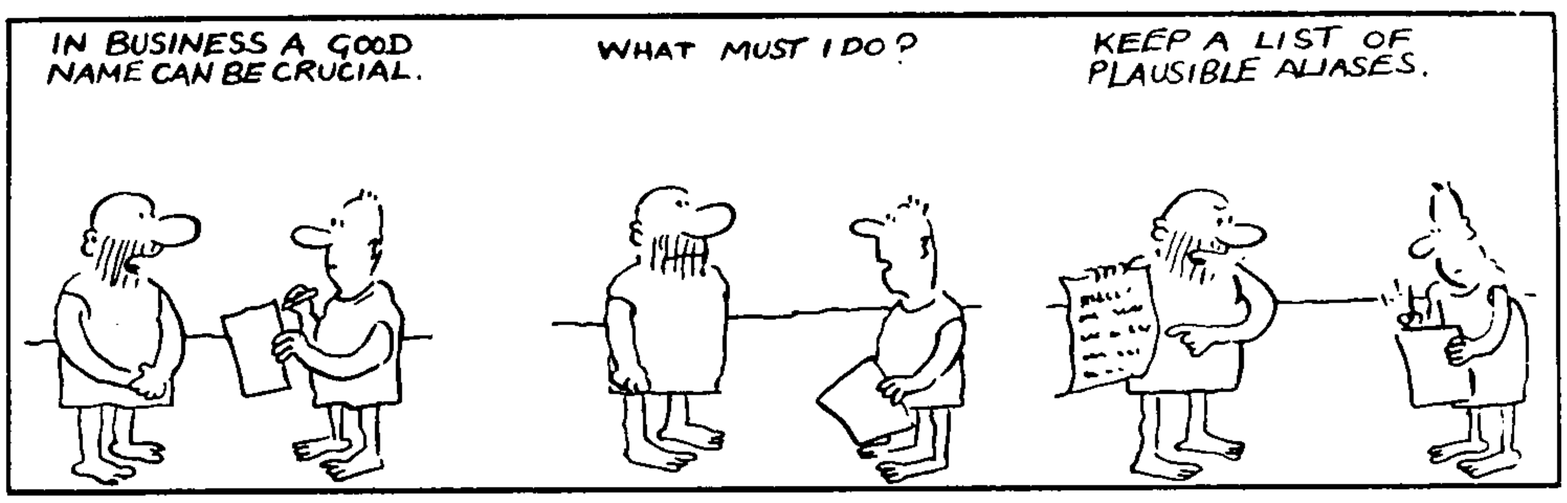
The value of the sucre plummets; inflation increases daily; money which formerly went in subsidies leading to affordable gas and electricity has now gone into the ruined banks. The fallout from the flotation of the Brazilian real is hardly likely to bring prosperity, peace and fecundity to our land; already the Central Bank has given up spending its precious dollars to prop up our own currency, resulting in a slide of some 20 percent in its value this month.

Meanwhile Jamil spends more than $1.5m on publicity for himself in a ruined country. People know exactly who and what he is — unpopular, with a disingenuous smirk.

While people in the mountain regions seem resigned to these calamities, in Guayaquil, the country's largest city and main port, they're less restrained. Every day the TV shows in glorious technicolour policemen who have been disembowelled or decapitated. A state of emergency has been declared in and a curfew is in force there.

Even supposedly docile Quito fell prey to three days of general strikes last week. There have been riots, and tear gas has been used on the streets. The peasants in the south of the country, largely dependent on already inadequate state handouts, look increasingly likely to rise up, and the guerrillas to return. After 20 years of civilian rule, a fresh military coup would surprise no one here.

HOM SAP



AUSTIN

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH

● "Since I had run up some huge debts, I decided to sever my feet to get insurance money, so I could pay back what I owed," Chung Kyu Chil finally admitted to South Korean police. "So I asked an acquaintance to cut off my feet at the ankle, and throw them away."

Chung, a fifty-one-year-old grocer with debts of almost a billion Won, was questioned by Seoul police after they had become suspicious about his initial story. "We were called to his store after a customer found Chung lying in a bloody heap on the floor," a police spokesman said. "At first Chung told us that somebody must have sliced off his lower limbs after he had passed out during a heavy drinking binge. But then we discovered that a local pharmacist had sold him some anaesthetic the day before, and that he had also taken out an insurance policy which would pay him two billion Won if he became disabled accidentally. When we also found out that he had been asking his neighbours for months if they would slice off his feet, we confronted him, and he admitted the scam. We'd like to prosecute him, but it's difficult. He hasn't actually tried to claim the insurance money yet, so we can't arrest him for fraud. And he didn't sign a sworn statement so we can't arrest him for perjury. So at present he's free to walk away. Well, crawl away." *(The Star [Malaysia], 22/12/98. Spotter: David Miller)*

—●—

● "Sir, I am carrying out an investigation into pork crackling and the distribution of brands across the country. Like so many things today, many locally-made varieties are under threat from the Big Boys in the shape of KP, and the like. I am, indeed, considering forming a Campaign for Real Crackling.

"Could I ask your members to write to me to inform me of their local brand. All I need is the full title of the product, the maker, and where it was purchased. There is no need to send full packets, unless the sender deems the product to be of such high quality that he would very much like yours truly to taste it. Other information that could be included is the type of product, i.e. was it a tough crackling or nice and crunchy with some soft fat bits, did the skin contain stubble and traces of ink stamp lettering, and was there much dried meat attached?

"Edward Burns, Flat 14, Hanover Court, 6 Logie Road, Stirling FK9 5JU." *(What's Brewing, December 98. Spotter: James Palmer)*

—●—

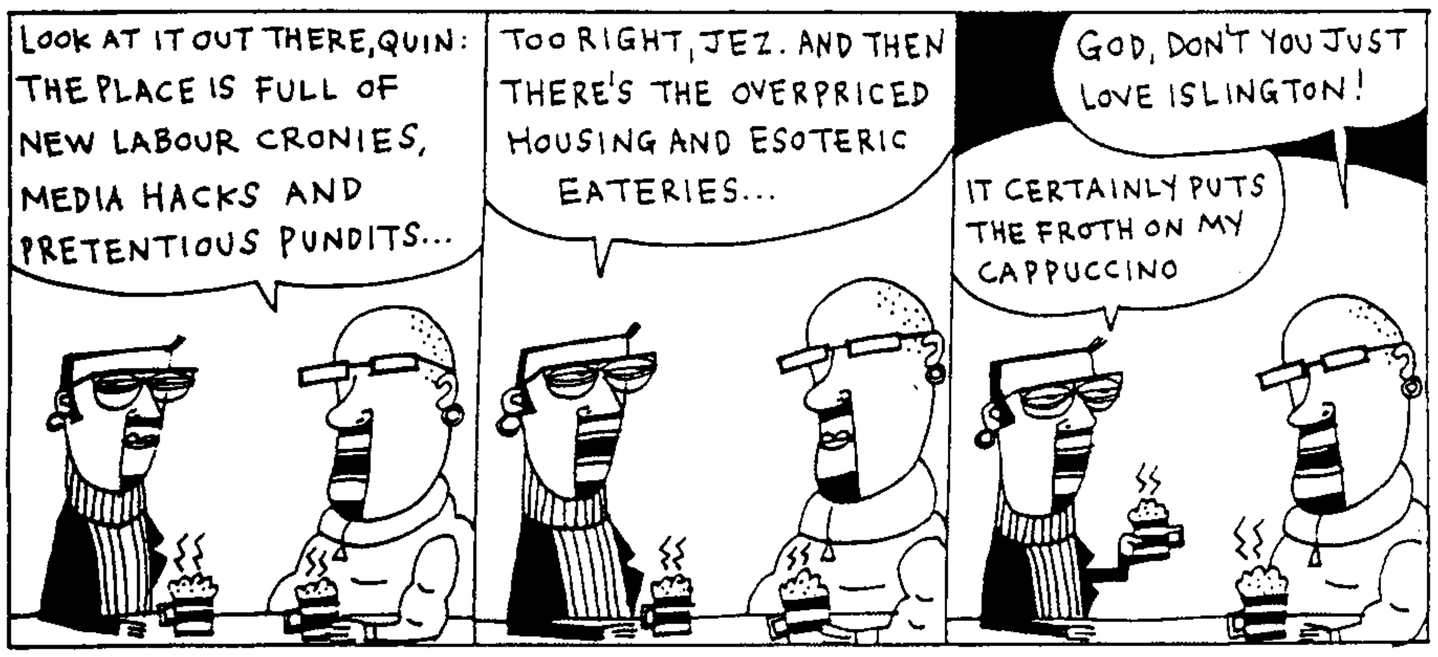
● *"It defies belief," Snr-Constable Paul Rohweder of the Nambour traffic branch told magistrates. "You see plenty of silly things in this job, but nothing this bizarre. We've targeted drink-driving and speeding in the past, but now we'll have to start warning women against doing this."*

Rohweder was speaking during the prosecution of a thirty-year-old Brisbane woman for dangerous driving. "We first clocked her car at about midday, travelling

on the wrong side of the road at 115kmh in a 60kmh zone near Beerwah on the Sunshine Coast, but it wasn't until we pulled her over that I realised what she'd been doing. She'd been driving at high speed while breastfeeding her baby, who was lying on her lap with his feet sticking out of the open car window. No seat belts, nothing. I mean, she could barely even reach the steering wheel or the brake pedal."

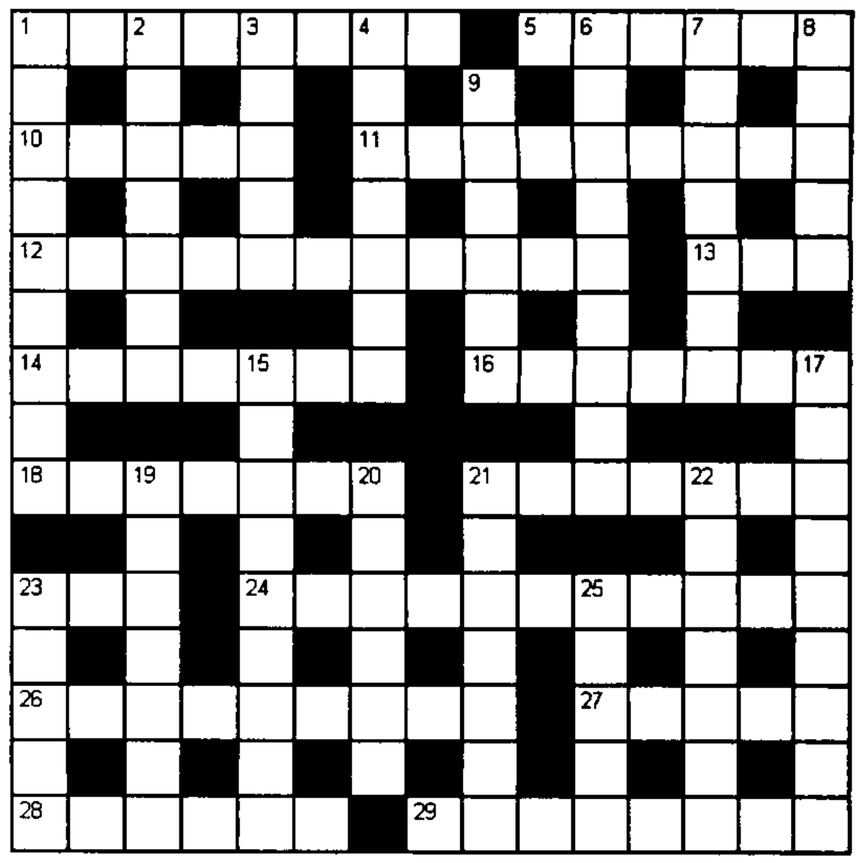
In her defence, the woman's solicitor stated that "my client was running late for a meeting, and was trying to make up time by breastfeeding her son and driving at the same time." The woman was fined $330 and lost nine driver demerit points. (Brisbane Courier and Mail, 28/12/98. Spotter: Norm Reynolds)

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON — KNIFE & PACKER


LOOK AT IT OUT THERE, QUIN: THE PLACE IS FULL OF NEW LABOUR CRONIES, MEDIA HACKS AND PRETENTIOUS PUNDITS...
TOO RIGHT, JEZ. AND THEN THERE'S THE OVERPRICED HOUSING AND ESOTERIC EATERIES...
GOD, DON'T YOU JUST LOVE ISLINGTON!
IT CERTAINLY PUTS THE FROTH ON MY CAPPUCCINO

EYE CROSSWORD 124

by Cyclops — *£100 prize*



ACROSS

1/24 Being unable to get hard currency I don't feel it's right to go out (8,11)
5 As donned by Bob going to hell? (6)
10 IOU Peter Mandelson briefly arranged – dope! (5)
11 *Eye* feature has many inches on Bill and leader of Senate (9)
12 A possible solution to 1 ac., chaps, Radio One broadcast (11)
13 *Eye* award – the beginnings of old boy network? (3)
14 His must get contorted, being a thin, long thing (7)
16 Old-style Socialist, Foot lives in hindrance (7)
18 Charlie's first in the morning to get off with one lady friend of his (7)
21 Piss-artist on reflection outdoes another piss-artist (7)
23 A side question put to Penny Junor ultimately (3)
24 (see 1 ac.)
26 (see 23 dn.)
27 The old leader's flipping pecker game (5)
28 Tailored panty hose (no exclamations) the worker's ultimate reward (3,3)
29 Bernard and Betty most recently reach a climax with Brenda in seconds (8)

DOWN

1 Big-head came in a flash to store energy (9)
2 Ecstasy-taking Stone accepts article as an apt description (7)
3 The pace of casual love (5)
4 Those shunned by New Labour feel it's wrong (7)
6 Dukes' restraining apparatus when employees are without smack (9)
7 Frankie tried to get screwed (7)
8 Girl of scant physical attraction featured in tabloid (5)
9 Convivial undercover agents hosted by the Sun (6)
15 Model ravished by lecher with a piece of ham (9)
17 Nerds point to tramps featured in girlie mags (4,1,4)
19 Market about 6 up – an anathema to the capitalist! (7)
20 Heartless wanker's unlikely comeback (6)
21 Grope from contact on high (5,2)
22 Hi, Peter. Get out – please! (7)
23/26 Brenda's major piece on the reported issue of Rupert Murdoch (5,9)
25 Do Georgia line dance (5)

£100 prize to first solution opened on 12.2.99. Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 123

Winner: ALLAN WISBEY

ACROSS: 1 Immoral 5 (see 27) 9 Poking fun 10 Yahoo 11 Amoroso 12 Balls-up 14/25dn Hatchet-man 16 Gestapo 17 Eyewash 20 HP Sauce 22 Transom 23 Mangled 25 Motto 26 Ladies' man 27/5 Nuclear warfare 28 Resigns

DOWN: 1/13 Impeachment proceedings 2 Make out 3 Ringo 4 Left out 5 Windbag 6 Royalists 7 Aphasia 8 Ego 13 (see 1dn) 15 Headstone 18 Elastic 19 Himmler 20 Humidor 21 Ugly mug 24 Needs 25 (see 14)

TORY RESIGNS IN SHAME

by Our Political Staff
Gay Search

A LEADING Tory Euro-MP has been forced to resign after admitting last night that he was "a practising Europhile".

Mr Tom Spencer confessed that he made regular trips to Brussels where he took part in sordid encounters with fellow Europhiles.

Mr Spencer told the Conservative Ethics Committee, "I have never made a secret of my European proclivities and I do not understand what all the fuss is about. I thought Conservatives were meant to be more tolerant to deviants nowadays."

Mr Spencer, who claims to have been targetted by Europhobes, was raided by Customs officers who found a stash of explicit pro-European literature concealed in a bag of cocaine.

"It's only a serving suggestion"

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The Disgraceful Example of Mr Spencer

Sir, I was disgusted to read in your 12 page exclusive that a Conservative MEP had been a purchaser of European Gay Porn.

What, may I ask, is wrong with Traditional British Gay Porn which is acknowledged to be some of the best quality Gay Porn in the world?

Yet, our industry is being flooded by inferior European imports produced in sweatshop conditions and without proper Health and Safety supervision.

Research shows that British customers prefer high quality home-grown British Porn and are quite prepared to pay extra for this privilege.

Mr Spencer has rightly paid the price for his unpatriotic behaviour. How could he act as he did when available to him in this country were such acknowledged classics of the genre as: *Boys From The Met, Meet The Marines, MCC Studs Take A Shower,* and *Ron Davies MP's Rough Trade Guide To Clapham..*

Yours sincerely,
MR RONALD PELLING,
The British Gay Pornography Trade Association,
34 Filth Street (Top Buzzer)
Soho.

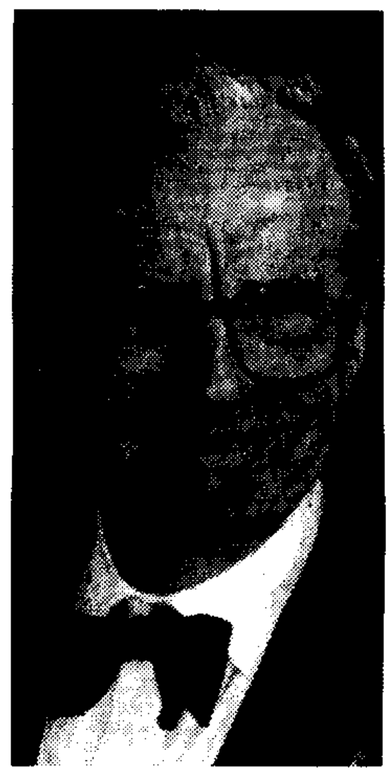
Cedric Spart, Co-Chair of the Tufnell Park Protect HIV Chimpanzees From The Bushmen Collective.

...it is totally sickening to witness once again the persecution of a totally innocent MP solely on the grounds that he is gay whilst pretending that he had in some way committed a crime by breaking the law about drugs and pornography... er, typically, the media have engaged in a sickening witch-hunt of the type that drummed Peter Mandelson out of office for a minor financial irregularity whereas his real crime was not admitting that he was gay along with 417 other MPs who pathetically resisted the legitimate demands of Peter Tatchell to drop the age of consent to a sensible 12 years old and er... *(cont. p. 94)*

WHAT YOU WON'T READ IN THE MURDOCH PRESS

THE Sun

DIRTY DIGGER BUYS FILTHY LOVE NEST IN SEX PARADISE



BLIMEY! Randy Rupe has splashed out on a luxury $100 million love pad for his exotic oriental dish Wendy Deng, an expert in the eastern arts of lovemaking, in New York's Raunchy Soho District, the sex capital of the world!

FILTH!

Friends we didn't speak to are worried that the ageing Romeo could well suffer the fate of fellow press baron Lord Rogermore who died, according to us, in the arms of *his* oriental temptress while taking the sex potion Viagra!

MADE-UP DRIVEL!

Apparently, the Digger's family are embarrassed by the non-stop bonking antics of the septuagenarian Sky sex king who *(cont. p. 69)*

WHAT YOUR AILMENTS SAY ABOUT YOUR PREVIOUS LIFE

SUN EXCLUSIVE

by Mystic Hod

FLU

YOU were probably an ancient Egyptian slave who helped to build the pyramids, but stole a bag of sand.

BACKACHE

YOU were most likely to have been a sailor on Nelson's flagship the Victory who deserted from the Navy by jumping overboard the night before the battle.

ATHLETE'S FOOT

YOU were certainly a serial killer in days of yore, possibly Jack The Ripper or Dr Crippen.

Find out about *your* previous existence by ringing the Hodline

0898 742732

(All calls charged at maximum rate.)

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

I hope you are all keeping well and have managed to keep this flu at bay!

It's no laughing matter, as I saw for myself when I made an unannounced visit to our local hospital, St Aneurin's!

It was very heartwarming to see the dedication of the nurse, as she coped splendidly with the hundreds of patients who were queuing up for admission!

There can't be much wrong with a hospital where people are prepared to wait for 18 hours just to get in!

As the nurse told me, with a smile, "People are literally dying to get in here!"

As I came away, I couldn't help thinking how impressive was the dedication of that nurse — someone in a responsible position, serving the public without any thought of financial reward!

I expect all of you can think of somebody like that! I know I can! Someone perhaps standing not very far from you now who is actually foregoing any increase in his vicar's stipend, as an example to others around him who put wages before service.

I don't want to bring personalities into this, but Mr Prescott will know who I might be referring to! No offence, John, but you don't get tipped working as a steward for the parish, you know!

As it says in the Bible, "Blessed are the do-gooders. For they shall hunger and thirst because they aren't paid anything" *(Sermon on the Cheap, Matthew 8.13).*

What a lesson for us all! You see, we mustn't go on about money, as if it was

the only thing which matters!

Look, some people will always be poor, like nurses, teachers and the like.

And some people will always be rich, like our friends Mr Robinson, Mr Sainsbury and Mr Murdoch.

The difference is that the ones who are poor get their reward in terms of our esteem and gratitude, and the knowledge that they are contributing something really valuable to the community.

But so, of course, are the rich people! Thank goodness we've moved on from the days when it was thought to be a crime to make money and that there was something admirable about not making any!

Yours,

Tony

MOVING ON...

Our best wishes to the Rev Ashdown of the United Reform Democratic Church who has sadly decided to step down and retire with Jane to Yeovil. Enjoy yourself, Paddy. You deserve a good long rest after all the work you have done in working to bring your church closer to mine! We all want our oecumenical "project" to flourish, and I am sure that your successor (whoever we choose!) will carry on the good work!

T.B.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS

■ The Vicar wishes it to be known that he is extremely angry over criticism in the parish of his decision not to send his daughter Antonia to St Albion's Primary School but to send her instead to the Convent of the Sacred League Tables in the neighbouring parish of Richman-on-Thames. I would like to remind everyone that I could easily send my children to private schools if I so wished. But I prefer to stand by my principles and to send Antonia to the best school that money can't buy. Anyone else could do exactly the same, if they were the vicar. As it says in the Good Book, "Many are called, but very few get in, including mine" *(Book of Strings, Ch.5).*

■ The vicar wishes it to be known that the suggestion by the former lady incumbent of the parish, Deaconess Thatcher, that he is in some way "bossy" is entirely untrue and WILL NEVER be repeated by anyone in St Albions ever again. Understood? T.B.

Thought for the Day

(chosen by Mrs Mowlam)

"This is the peace that passeth all understanding"

(Book of Punishments, 17.2)

Parish Postbag...

Dear Vicar,

Let us hope that the departure of the Rev Pantsdown will finally knock on the head all this bloody silly talk about unity between the churches. We at St Albion's can do perfectly well on our own, thank you very much, without any help from

Yours faithfully,
J. Prescott,
The Working Men's Club.

The Editor reserves the right to cut all letters for reasons of space. A.C.

Dear Sir,

It's all very well for the vicar to tell the rest of the PCC to go without their pay rises. But not all of us have got a rich wife who ponces around the law courts in a stupid wig earning millions of pounds defending lesbians who want to

Yours faithfully,
John Prescott,
The Working Men's Club.

The Editor continues to reserve the right to cut all letters from Mr Prescott. A.C.

FOR SALE

Desirable 4-bedroomed bachelor's house in secluded up-market area.

Beautifully decorated by Italian interior designer (Carla Powelli) with ample closet space.

Owner forced to sell due to unforeseen circumstances.

Offers in region of £1 million.
Apply P. Mandelson, C/o The Robinson Loan Co, Guernsey.

NEW CHORUS

For use in next Sunday's Evensong. Try to learn the word's everyone — Jack Cunningham, Church Warden.

The bad old days are over,
We can't live in the past,
We're not upper, we're not lower,
No, we're now all middle class.

Chorus

Middle class, middle class,
That's what we are today,
Middle class, middle class,
It's the Thi-ird Way!

(Words and music T. Blair)

THE RACE IS ON! LIB DEM TITANS BATTLE FOR PADDY'S TOP JOB

by Our Political Staff ROY HATTINRING

BRITAIN held its breath yesterday as the biggest power-battle in the history of modern politics got under way.

As veteran statesman Paddy Ashdown bows out, some of the brightest names in the Lib Dem political firmament were jostling for the supreme power that comes with the title "Leader of the Lib Dems".

PADDY SHOWDOWN

By late last night an astonishing 27 Lib Dem MPs had already let it be known that their names could be put forward for the most coveted post in Lib Dem political life.

They include:

● **Nick Cardigan**, 43, MP for Woolly North. Cardigan is on the right of centre, pro-European and believes passionately that he would be "the best man for the job".

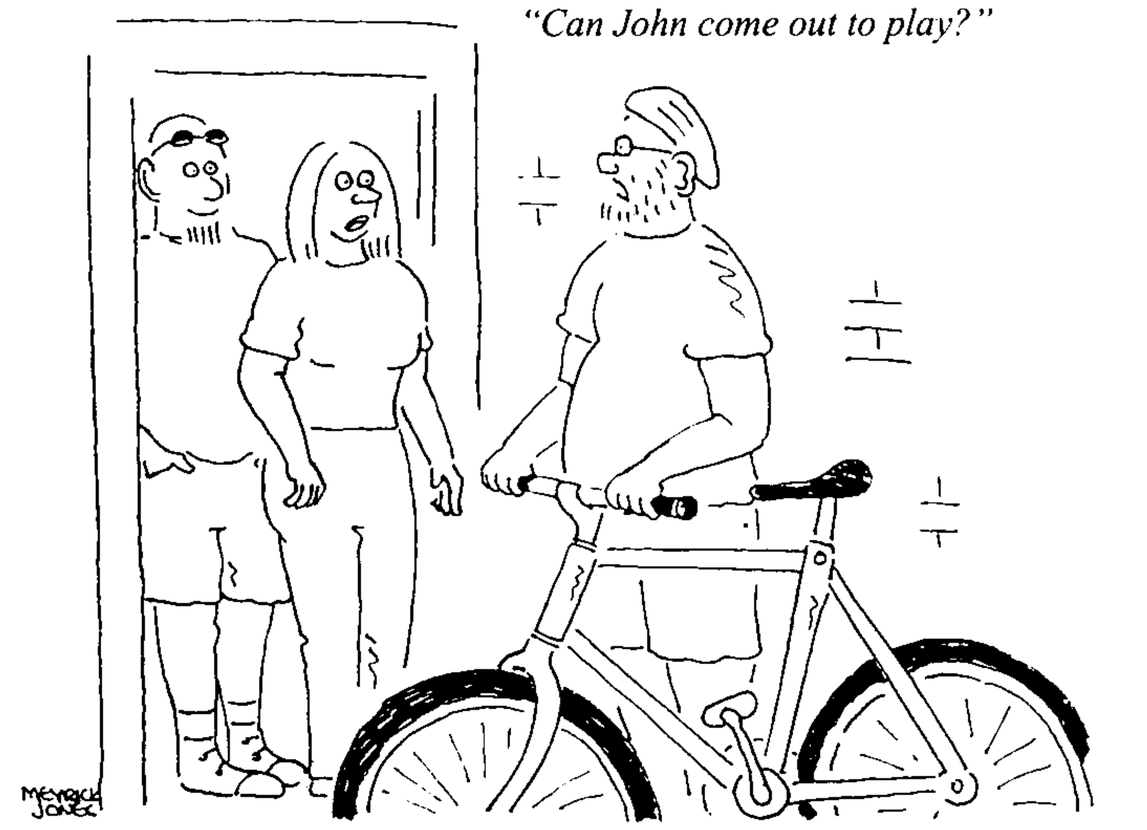
● **James "Jim" Jersey**, 46. Jersey is to the left of right, pro-European and surprised his supporters by snatching the true-blue seat of Teacosy South at the 1997 election with a swing of 54 percent.

● **Jackie Muffler**, 41. Jackie is right of left, pro-European, and the front-running woman in the 27-horse race. Her constituents in Cuddly-on-Sea see her as "the man to lead the Lib Dems into the new Millennium".

● **Arran McSweater**, 69, MP for Ballaclarver. A middle-of-centre pro-European, McSweater is the former leader of the Fair Isle Council, who claims to have taken "community politics north of the border". He believes passionately in keeping warm during the long winter nights.

● **Nigel Kennedy**, 23. Boyish, intensely able left of left middle-of-the-road violinist, who hopes to take the Lib Dems to the top of the charts at the next election (Surely "third place as usual"? Ed.).

● **Tony Blair**, 45. Boyish, intensely able left, right and centre politician who, although he is not standing, is hotly tipped to be leader of all parties by the next election.



Olympic Round-Up

by Inspector Knacker of Scotland Metre

Six to watch

● **BACKHANDA** RUMBABWE's ace long-distance bung champion. Current holder of the Olympic Gold Watch *(donated by Salt Lake City).*

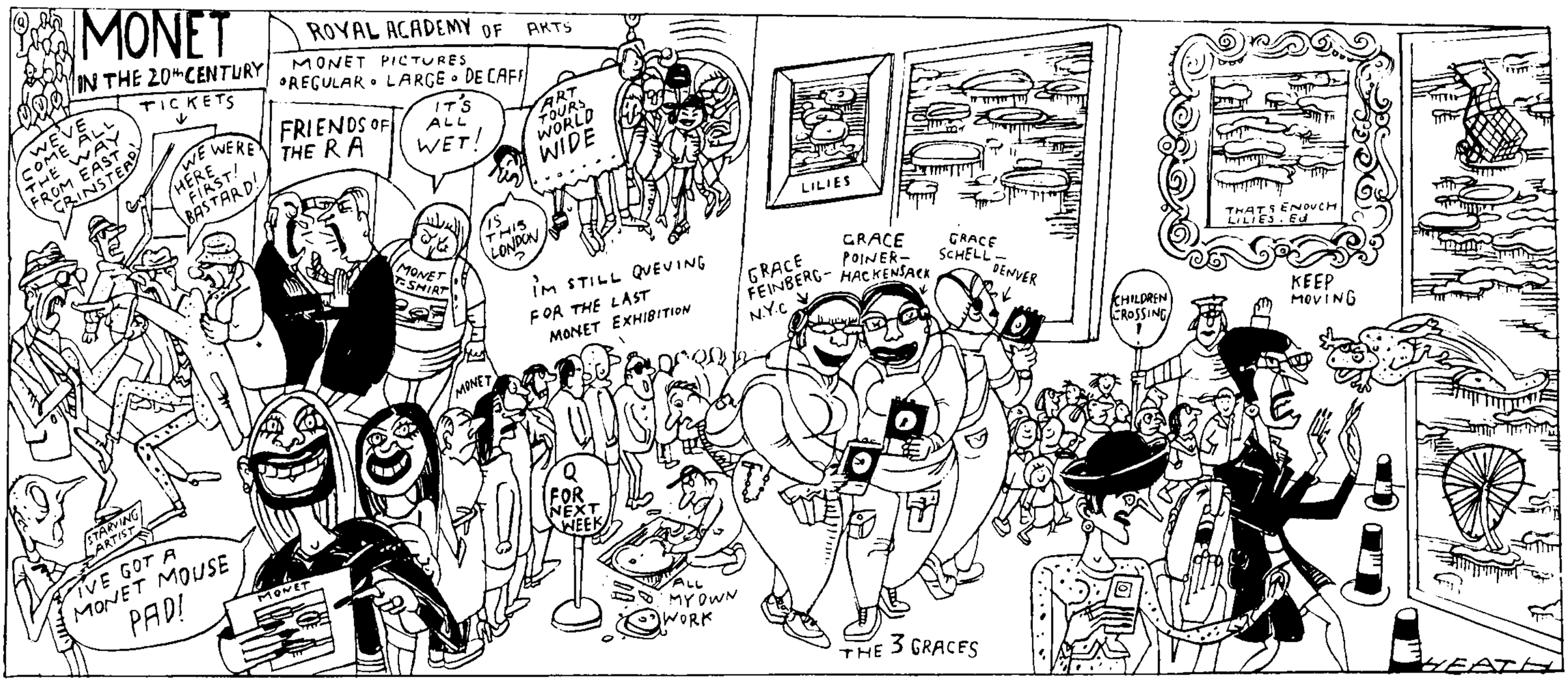
● **EL BRIBO** BRAZILIAN national kick-back champion. Current holder of the Olympic Bronzed Model, Señorita Rita Legovia *(services donated by City of Barcelona).*

● **FREEBINI** ITALY's internationally renowned payola star. Current holder of the Olympic Silver Cutlery Canteen *(donated by City of Sydney).*

● **SWEETENA** THE bouncing Czech who currently holds the $200,000 record for Undercounter Payments *(donated by various cities since 1983).*

● **HRH PRINCESS ANNE** *(Shurely shome mishtake? Ed.)*

HEATH'S PRIVATE VIEW



"Hi, it's me — just ringing to say I won't be home on the 6.10..."

The Alternative Rocky Horror Service Book

No. 94 A Service Of Holy Matrimony For Persons Who Have Never Previously Met Each Other

The President *(for it is he)*: Hi! And welcome to all our listeners here on *(At this point he may say "Radio Neasden" or it may be "Good morning Fenland")* on 74.62 KFM, the station where news comes last. And a special welcome this morning to our celebrant the Rev. J. C. Flannel.

(At this point, the congregation may whoop and cheer)

"Sorry, now isn't the time for another book about Jacqueline, even by you"

Vicar: After the service we'll have the weather and traffic. But first, the marriage. And in the church this morning we have a lovely couple, N. and M. *(It may be Darren and Sandra, or it may be Dean and Lianne.)*

Now, all you two have to do is answer a few simple questions, and you'll win a free honeymoon in Thailand and a free canteen of cutlery for your dream kitchen when you come home.

Congregation: Oooh! *(Or they may say Aaah!)*

Vicar: Here we goeth. Do you, Tracy, know this man, Gareth?

Tracy: I do not.

Vicar: And do you, Liam, know this woman, Kelly-Sue?

Liam: I do not.

Vicar: Just one more question, and this one's for our studio congregation. If anyone here knows if these two people have ever met before, ye are to speak up now.

(The congregation will here remain silent)

Vicar: Great! That's it! I now pronounce you man and wife. We shall now sing hymn no. 94 'Getting To Know You' from *The King and I.*

THE READING

(The vicar will then read out the traffic and weather report. He may say, "There are long tailbacks on the M46 after a lorry hath shed its load", or he may say, "There will be scattered showers, clearing up towards the end of the afternoon")

Vicar: You may now kiss the bride. She's the one in the white dress next to you.

Congregation: Aaah! *(Or it may be Oooh!)*

Vicar: Well, that's all we've got time for. So, remember, what Radio Neasden hath joined together, let no man put asunder without first selling us the rights.

(There may then follow the divorce)

© Radio Neasden, The Thailand Honeymoon Experience, Spoons 'R Us, Sheffield, and the Rocky Horror Service Book plc

In Today's Telegraph

'I don't regret a word of THAT book' says ***Margaret Cook***

In Tomorrow's Telegraph

'I'm sorry I ever wrote THAT book' says ***Margaret Cook***

In The Day After Tomorrow's Telegraph

'He deserved everything he got' says ***Margaret Cook***

In The Weekend Telegraph

'Poor Robin! I Never Meant To Make Him A National Laughing Stock And Hopefully Destroy His Career Ha Ha Ha!' says ***Margaret Cook***

● ***PLUS***
10 Ways to a Better Love Life
by Top Sex Doctor ***Margaret Cook***

● ***PLUS***
Is Sex in your stars?
asks Mystic ***Margaret Cook***
etc, etc.

● ***And don't miss***
Paul Johnson's weekly column.
"Jonathan Aitken is innocent even though he says he is guilty. He is clearly lying to the court about having lied to the court. Yet I know that Jonathan is a man incapable of telling a lie. So there can only be one explanation for this — that I am completely and utterly mad."

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

Letters to the Editor

Damn you, England!

From Lady Carla Powell

Sir — Alla my life, I luvva the Inglaterra! Your cricket, your warm beer, your Englisha gentlemen like Jimmy Goldsmith!

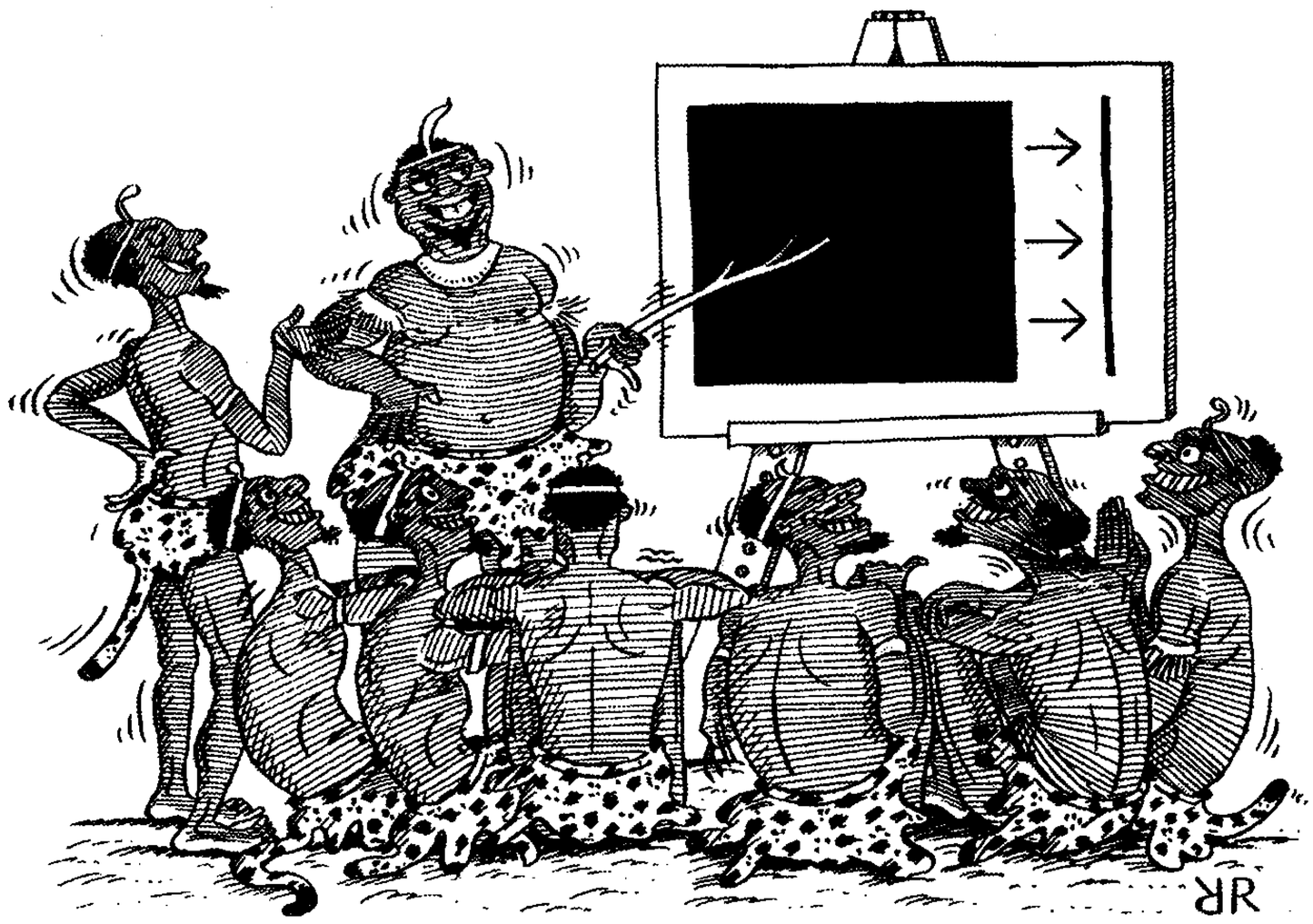
But now I donta like you no more! Whadda you do to my friend Peter Mendelson, eh?

Now he's gotta no job, no money, no nothing!

He is a sweeta, kinda man who donta say "boo" to no goose!

I say whatsammater you people? You gotta no respect? So shaddappa your face!

LADY CARLA POWELL
Bayswater Road
London



Tactics Seminar, Military Staff College, Zululand 1879

At last, the story that's only been told a lot of times before...

Channel Four's exclusive

PROGRAMME X

Part 93: The Final Enigma — how could anyone make such a bad series out of such an interesting story?

(Sepia film of actors wearing 1940s-style hats carrying suitcases into huts.

Cut to archive footage of Hitler reviewing troops.

Cut to nice old lady sitting in chintzy drawing room, clutching pekinese)

Lavinia Starborgling *(for it is she)*: I had a phone call one afternoon from my cousin in the Foreign Office. He said "Lavvie, you do the Telegraph crossword, don't you? You're just the sort of gal they're looking for at this very hush-hush place in Buckinghamshire, where you're going to win the war."

"Golly," I said, "that sounds a lark!"

(Ominous sounding chords over ships heaving through mountainous seas)

Voice-over: But for our convoys in the North Atlantic, the work done at Blotchley Park was anything but a lark.

(Cut to reconstruction of giant early computer, whirring and extruding reels of perforated paper.

Cut to red-faced elderly man in pub)

Prof. Wilfred Branestawm: Alan Turing was an extraordinary chap. He could do the Telegraph crossword in two seconds. But no doubt about it, he won the war, if anyone did.

(Shot of Hitler committing suicide in bunker)

Lavinia Starborgling: One night we all came back late from the "Fox and Hounds" and decided to make Alan an apple pie bed. Of course, Alan was a bit funny about girls, so he *(cont. p. 94)*

HUSBAND

So I said put down the axe or I'll split your skull with it.
So what happened?
Nothin'... You know me mum, her bark's worse than her bite

THE SUN SAYS

The Great Junket Scandal

THEY travel first class everywhere.

They eat at the best restaurants and stay at the fanciest hotels. They drink the finest wines and run up enormous expenses.

Of course, they argue that all this is necessary in the course of their public duties.

But we all know there is only one word for these people.

Journalists.

WE SAY

Lunch with contact at L'Etoile	£173.50
Taxi to lunch	£78.75
Overnight stay in restaurant after lunch	£732.47
Total	**£2,789**

TV Highlights

BBC1 8.00pm *"Changing Channels"* — series about interior decorating that makes you want to change your channel immediately.

ITV 8.30pm *"Carol Vorderman's Better Programmes"* — series about interior decorating that makes you want to find some better programmes at once.

BBC2 8.30pm *"Leave Your Home Front"* — series about interior decorating that makes you want to go out to the cinema or *(That's enough highlights. Ed.)*

SIR PAUL LASHES 'PHILISTINE' BBC FOR BANNING WIFE'S SONG

by Our Arts Staff **Phil E. Stein**

BRITAIN's foremost composer Sir Paul McArsehole last night accused the BBC of "blatant censorship" in refusing to give air time to a recording by his late wife Lady Linda McArsehole of her posthumous masterpiece "Bollocks To Everyone".

Said Sir Paul from his £6 million, 84-bedroom Sussex recording studio, "It is an insult to Linda's memory that her final tender and moving message to the world should be banned by the BBC."

VEGGIEBURGER OFF

"Kids should be allowed to judge for themselves and to respond to the record's unique blend of spiritual enlightenment and human dignity by going out and buying it."

In a full-page advert in the Times, Sir Paul this morning calls upon parents "to exercise parental guidance by directing their children to the nearest record shop to purchase a copy of Linda's immortal classic album 'Fuck Off The Lot Of You' ". *(Paperback Reuters)*

WHAT YOU WON'T HEAR — THAT LINDA LYRIC IN FULL

Hey, you wankers, you make me sick.
If you don't like me, you must be
a dick.
Anyone who dares to criticise Linda
Should be thrown out of the
fucking window.

(Write a tune to this, Paul, or there won't be any meatless shepherd's pie for supper. L.)

MEDIA WEDDING 'JUST A PR STUNT'

by Our Political Affairs Correspondent **Benjamin Wegg-Tosser**

A HIGH-PROFILE arranged marriage was denounced yesterday as a "sham" and the participants criticised as "pathetic publicity seekers who would do anything to get into the papers".

The couple, Tony Blair, 45, and Paddy Ashdown, 59, had little in common but were put together in "a marriage of convenience" in the hope that they would enjoy a "political honeymoon".

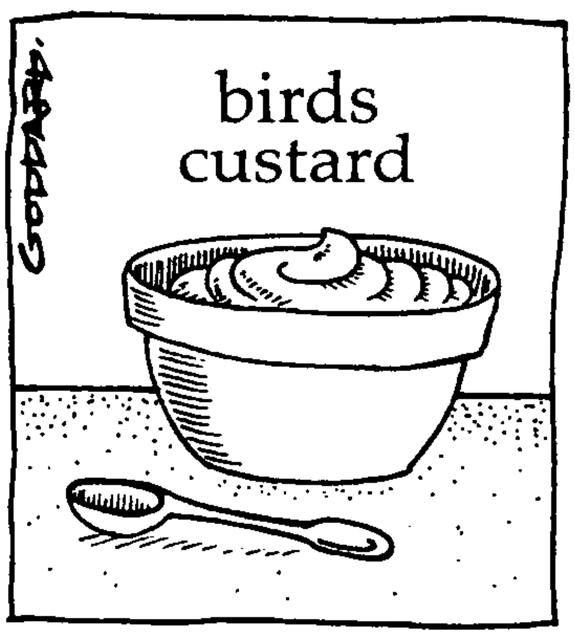
BLAND DATE

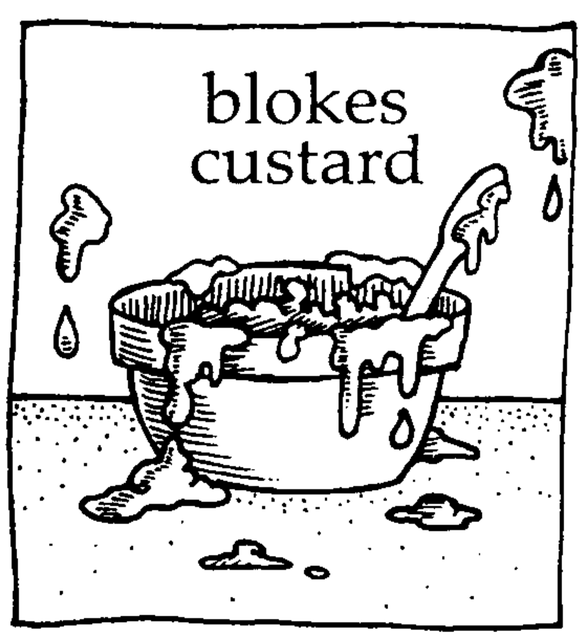
But the question remains — did they get into bed with each other or not? "No," say friends of Tony. "Yes," say confidantes of Paddy.

Whatever the truth, the marriage now looks as if it is over before it has even begun.

Tony has been revealed in the papers to be a "serial love-rat" who has had previous flings with both Margaret Thatcher and Lord Jenkins of Hillhead. He has also been accused of cheating on long-term partner Gordon Brown.

Paddy, on the other hand, has been branded "a glamorous airhead" who is only in it for the fame and *(cont. p. 94)*





LORD BADMAN An Apology

IN COMMON with all other newspapers over the past 30 years, we may have given the impression that the late Lord Goodman was in some way a saintly figure who had devoted his life to the service of the nation and to philanthropic acts too numerous to mention. We may further have given the impression that he was a man of the utmost probity, totally scrupulous in all his business dealings, who had rightly won the admiration of all with whom he came in contact for his profound sense of honour, duty and rectitude.

We now recognise that there was not a jot, tittle, scintilla or vestige of truth in any of the above farrago of falsehoods. We accept unreservedly that Lord Badman was nothing more than a thief, swindler, crook and conman whose sharp practice with his clients' funds was matched only by his inordinate gluttony.

We would like to apologise to our readers for any distress that our misrepresentation of Lord Badman may inadvertently have given rise to. We have made a substantial donation to ourselves in full recompense for writing this apology.

© All newspapers

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

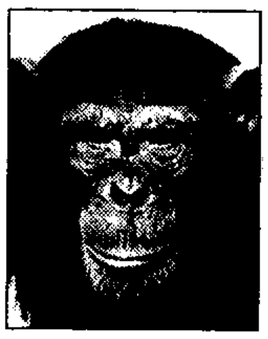
From The Hon. David Astor and Others

Sir, We are deeply shocked at the cowardly way in which your newspaper chose to report that our friend Lord Goodman stole £1 million from one of his oldest and most valued clients. Such behaviour is particularly reprehensible in light of the fact that Arnold Goodperson is dead, and therefore is in no position to issue a writ for libel and a claim for damages.

Yours,
D. ASTOR
SIR EDWARD HEATH
MICHAEL FOOT
The late JENNIE LEE
The late HAROLD WILSON
LADY FORKBENDER
and all in 'D' Wing,
Ford Open Prison

100 Years Ago

GOODMANZEE ABUSED



IN a shocking display of cruelty, a small 20-stone Goodmanzee was subjected to a campaign of sustained abuse and cruelty by Private Eye.

Said the judge, "I have never come across a more shocking case. This is the 1970s, not the Middle Ages. This harmless Goodmanzee has done nothing except sit in his cage eating his two dinners and issuing writs — and yet these vile young men have jeered at him." *(Daily Mail, 1971)*

PRODUCT RECALL

New Labour™

Placed on market 1 May 1997

The manufacturers of the above product wish it to be known that a large number of faults have developed in the New Labour™. Under certain circumstances, the New Labour will bend, buckle and fall to bits, rendering it wholly useless. Customers are advised that the New Labour cannot in any circumstances be returned, and that no claims for compensation will be considered.

This statement is issued by Mr A. Campbell, Managing Director of New Labco, Unit 17, The Trading Estate, Islington N1.

NURSERY TIMES

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 5 1999

'WE WERE NEVER MARRIED' — SINGER'S SHOCK CLAIM

by Our Celebrity Staff **Humpty Dumpster**

ONE of the nursery world's golden couples have split up amidst claims that their long-standing marriage was never legal.

The owl and the pussycat were married in an unconventional ceremony on a beach in the land where the bong trees grow.

The service was conducted by a turkey that lived on the hill and the best man was a local pig who provided a ring from his nose (the owl being notoriously mean and not having brought one of his own).

Jagger and the Beanstalk

But singing star the owl, famous for his hit ballad "O what a beautiful pussy you are", now says that his estranged partner, the pussycat, was never his wife and is not entitled to share in his fortune — estimated at a staggering jar of honey and plenty of money wrapped up in a five pound note.

The pussycat is adamant that the marriage was binding and her lawyers cite the wedding feast of quince and mince as clear evidence of the owl's intentions.

The owl has been linked in recent years with a string of girlfriends, including the Spoon's ex-wife, the Dish, and the woman who lives in a shoe who has issued a number of paternity suits against the owl.

The Eye's Exciting New Columnist!!

POLLY FILLER

FEBRUARY is a nightmare. EuroDisney is sold out for half-term and the useless Simon forgot to book the skiing holiday in Val d'Isère. Now he says the only option left is three days in Centre Parks, but we can't get a separate chalet for the au-pair — so that's out.

Talking of which, this government has apparently decided that au-pairs aren't being paid enough. They should come round to our house! Not only do we pay our girl enough to support half of Croatia (at least £35 a week), but we allow her to eat all the Ryvita and cottage cheese that she wants — free, gratis and for nothing.

Really, we might as well have a swarm of locusts in our kitchen. Last week I went into the fridge to get out a bottle of fizz (Charlie's got into a decent pre-prep, thank God!) and found little miss greedy guts had helped herself to a fromage frais and half a banana.

And now, if the so-called nanny state gets its way (or "no nanny state", as Emma and the girls at the Brasserie have started calling it), we'll have to fork out a whopping £3.50 an hour as well as board, lodging and putting up with a dreary, homesick adolescent sobbing all night.

So, instead of paying £35 a week, we'll now have to give her £90. I mean, I could buy Charlie a Baby Gap leather jacket for that!

I SUPPOSE we will all have to accept it and tighten our belts —especially the au-pair's. From now on, we're charging our girl £40 for the room, £20 food, £20 electricity and gas, £20 phone bill, £10 TV licence and £10 a week depreciation on the new carpet in her room. Simon has worked it out on his computer and it turns out that she now owes us £30 a week — which means by the end of March she can look after Charlie for a fortnight free while we go off to Bali for a much needed winter break — and perhaps by then Simon will have pulled his finger out and found us a decent villa for the summer — fat chance.

© *All newspapers*

EXCLUSIVE TO ALL NEWSPAPERS

EX-HUSBAND OF WOMAN WHO USED TO BE ON TV IN TIFF WITH OTHER WOMAN WHO IS ON LOCAL RADIO

Full story: Pages 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8-10.

Thousands Die In Colombian Earthquake, p. 94.

The Return of Christopher Columbus

DIARY

ROGER SCRUTON

IN a modern world where everything is for sale, where value is price and price is value, where cushions are everywhere and electric "cookers" are preferred to camp-fires, where pop-singers moan "Yeah Yeah Yeah Sex Yeah Yeah More Sex" and are rewarded for their screeches with the transient passions of teenaged girls, where petticoats are scorned and bowler-hats considered old-fashioned, where adolescents "snog" each other after a moment's acquaintance on "bean-bags" in the corners of poorly-lit "discotheques", where pampered patients insist on wishy-washy "anaesthetics" before undergoing major operations, where unkempt youths are permitted to plunge their tongues headlong into the cleavages of pert young sluts without a "please" or a "thank you", where drugs, alcohol and all types of sexual activity, performed at every angle, endlessly divert the youngster from his studies, where a 26 year old former nude model Miss Geri Halliwell need only don the tightest and shortest of dresses and parade about stage flaunting her bountiful cleavage and wiggling her buttocks in a shameless and provocative fashion in order to divert Professors from their readings of Goethe and Nietzsche, in this world there are no longer standards, either aesthetic or moral, that continue to hold force, as our culture spins helplessly towards oblivion. And Sporty Spice, with her new longer hairdo, devilishly bared arms, clingier trouser and flirtatious glint — suggestive, rapacious, unquenchable, undeniable — must also bear the brunt of the blame for the downfall of Western civilisation.

Whatever happened to faulty electrical fittings? In the old days, two or three youngsters would be electrocuted every day through haphazard wirings. But no more. Verily, things do not always change for the better, I fear.

There is no animal I would rather ride on an English hunt than a horse. The donkey is too stubborn, the camel too slow, the duck too flighty. I once rode to hounds upon the back of a chihuahua, but we had not leapt the first fence before the wretched beast perished beneath me, thoughtlessly leaving me to wrap it round my neck as an effective headscarf and to leap the fence all by myself.

Verily, the English horse is a creature of strength and beauty unsurpassed. I believe, moreover, that I shalst ne'er forget the first occasion upon which I found cause to ascend my doughty steed. Seventeen-hand horses were snorting and heaving to every side, their buttocks rippling with muscles like the seething wakes of ocean liners. Dobbin's neck was arched, his head down, with the bit held firmly in his teeth; his feet were dancing on the road, his tail swishing provocatively to and fro, and great surges of life rose through his quarters, invading and inflaming me on their way to his heart and to his head.

Ah, most equine of steeds! A novice, I climbed into the saddle and from this great height looked out o'er the clear view of yonder English hills. A crack of the whip, a crick of the spur, and Dobbin was up and away, like yesteryear's winged Perseus flying o'er lofty Mount Olympus! Never had I felt such a sensation, for I was now travelling backwards at great gallop, the swish-swish-swish of Dobbin's mighty tail beating heavily into my visage. But where was his head? Through the hairs of his tail, I searched for a head. Did not every mare perforce need a head? It was at this point I realised I had ascended my mount with a degree of incorrectitude, and I was facing the rear.

Civilisation continues through adherence to established codes. I did not intend to discommode the hunt by calling my horse to a halt and turning around in my saddle. Instead, I employed Dobbin's tail as reins, turned my helmet around and urged my noble steed to proceed backwards, thus maintaining my dignity at no cost to my fellow horsemen.

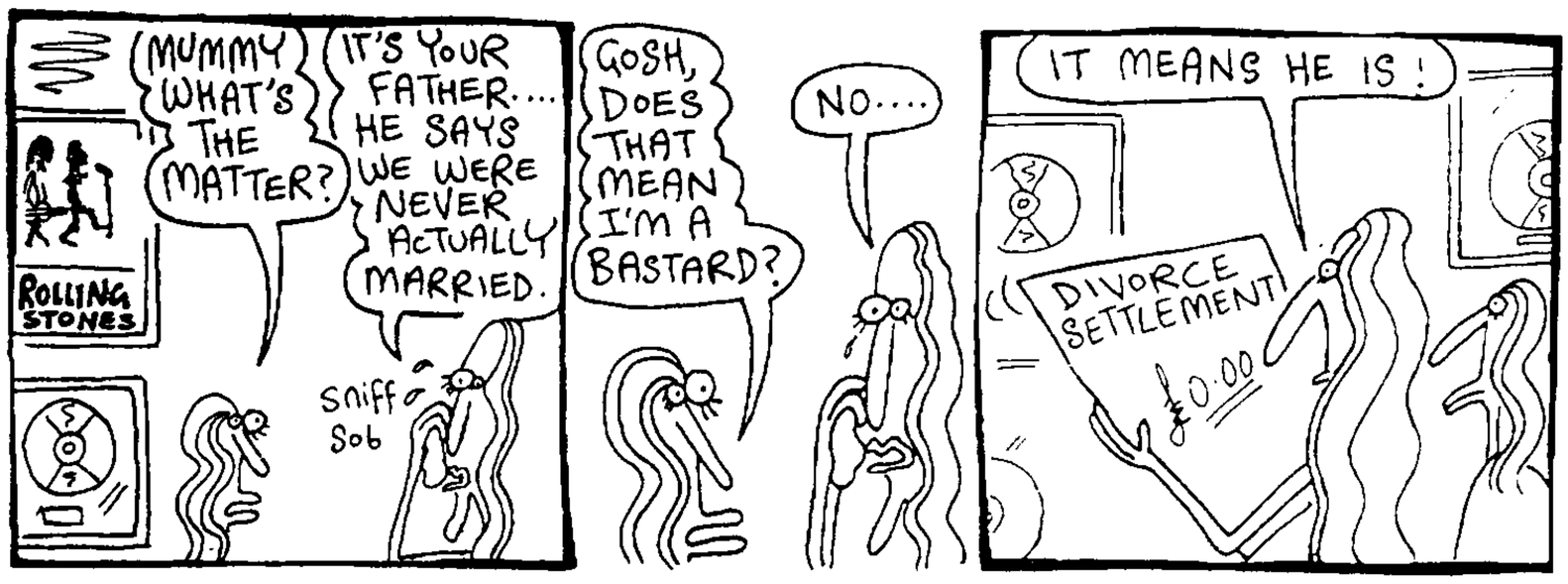
Whatever happened to good old tuberculosis? It was a disease of great character, perfectly adapted to these ancient isles. But now — despite many broken promises of a revival — it has all but petered out. In a modern world fixated with witless health, TB is sorely missed.

Being unpopular is never easy; but being unpopular in a good cause is a shield against despair. It was never easy, amidst the lax standards of the 1970s, to lend my voice to demands for stiff custodial sentences to be meted out to all children caught chewing bubblegum. It was not easy, in the liberal ethos of universities in the 1960s, to campaign for a statue of General Franco to be erected outside the Students Union at the University of Essex. Nor is it easy now, in the Blairite nineties, to speak up for that small but fiercely independent-minded minority who wish to apply electric shock treatment to all senior citizens who prove persistently late in paying their electricity bills. But I gain succour for my courage from those ancient English souls — Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Johnson, Chaucer, Churchill, Powell — who have verily entrusted me with their deep-seated beliefs in our ancestral freedoms. If this requires me to court unpopularity, so be it. As yellow sunlight pours over the English countryside and the blue-grey clouds in the distance scud hither and thither, uncorrupted, pliable, folding and forming in obedience to the will of God, I shall ne'er cease from campaigning for higher taxes on nurses and firemen, the selling of all British lifeboats to foreign powers for use as tools of indiscriminate homicide, and the renaming of all Mandela Streets throughout our land to something more in keeping with our native tradition, such as Enoch Avenue. Meanwhile, the gap left at the top of the Liberal Democratic Party must be filled by a man of proven grit, stamina and direction. Step forward, Augusto Pinochet — but don't expect it to make you popular.

Whatever happened to dogs that viciously bit postmen leaving them grievously wounded, perhaps mortally so? English dogs now lack the vim and spirit to do anything but sit, scamper, or wag their tails. These days, I fear even the dogs have gone to the dogs.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER



Dr Kenneth Harden, the chairman of the Scottish GP committee of the BMA, has already prescribed Viagra to six patients.

Scotsman

"Great praise is due to staff who worked on, sometimes suffering illnesses themselves while doing consecutive double shifts, to help care for patients – it has been a magnificent effort on their part.

Darlington & Stockton Times

Literary Review

Boy mates girl

Come Together
Josie Lloyd & Emlyn Rees
(Arrow, £5.99)

DEAR me, these young people! In case you hadn't heard, or don't read the assemblages of gossip that pass as books pages these days, the current fixation gripping the publishing industry is "twentysomethings".

Never mind the demographics or the economics (there aren't many of them, proportionately, and they don't have that much money), neither of which has ever cut much ice in booksville. Literary London is suddenly awhirr with the noise of motorbikes carrying fat white manuscripts written by waif-like 25 year olds from trend-surfing agents to nervous publishers just itching to throw them advances the size of the average Notting Hill mortgage.

Well, *Come Together* — love that title, darlings, sure you worked on it lots — is the twentysomething novel to end all twentysomething novels (a fine thing if it could be accomplished, incidentally). Written in alternating instalments by a boy/girl team who (shucks!) have only gone and got *married*, cannily aimed at the surprisingly large constituency that was seduced into thinking that *This Life* actually had some faint merit, it warmed the heart of some bountiful talent-spotter at Random House to the extent that a credulous exec ended up signing a cheque for £300,000.

What happens? "Jack Rossiter" (Emlyn) is a 27-year-old artist who likes painting babes in the nude, and has a, shall we say, somewhat unreconstructed attitude towards the fairer sex (his thought processes on, er, ways of treating the ladies had me shaking with laughter, though not I fear for quite the reasons Mr Rees intended, if indeed he intended it at all). "Amy Crosbie" (Josie) is a 25-year-old temp who hasn't had sex for six months and like any *Cosmo*-trained young woman of today is beginning to wonder whether she's "normal".

Throughout the 295-page chronicle of the extremely minor vicissitudes that wander into the path of true love, several facts become apparent. The first has to do with literary influences. Emlyn, I should say, is a fan of the early Martin Amis, in particular *The Rachel Papers*. Josie, bless the lamb, still hasn't got much beyond Bridget Jones. Whatever the provenance, the result is page after page of larksome lists. Neither of them can put down the phone, take a crap or tear off their clothes without everything rapidly degenerating into relationship taxonomy. She didn't a) Squeeze my hand, b) Stare lingeringly into my eyes, c) Ask me how come I didn't get lonely not having a girlfriend. I didn't offer her a) Coffee, b) A lift home, c) Small Talk. And so on.

As you might imagine, all this is accompanied by lashings of sex, performed up against walls and in shower compartments, and in-your-face gouts of intimate detail (what to do with the clippings after you've trimmed your pubic hair, etc). What irks about the resultant tone is not its gracelessness, but the fundamental confusion of aims with means. This is supposed to be a "romantic" comedy, right; yet, as is invariably the case in attempts at dewy-eyed hardcore, the romance is left winded in the gutter by the essentially *un*-romantic physical detail, and of course the attitudes that underlie it.

Jack is a callow shagger, Amy is — well, not exactly the most fastidious young miss on the block — but, oops, this is a *romance*, all you puritans. Amy, in particular, is a deeply suspect conflation of goofy gaucherie (she's reading a book called *Power Women* in her odd moments, don't you know) and able-to-take-care-of-myself-where-are-the-condoms-baby knowingness.

In short, a thoroughly modern tale of and for our young people in the late 90s — lots of straining pudenda (did W.H. Smith's smut detectors bother to read it, you wonder, before going overboard on the promotion?), humourless jokes, much self-satisfaction and a lurking sensation that the whole thing could have been wrapped up in 50 pages.

Never mind. Publication of *Come Together* has made two young people, and their bank manager, very happy.

WHAT YOU DIDN'T MISS Pt 94

The Year 1000: What Life Was Like At The Turn Of The First Millennium

by R. Lacey and D. Danziger

ANGLO-SAXON man looked and behaved remarkably like us. Most obviously, he had two arms and two legs, went to the lavatory on a daily basis and frequently enjoyed sex with his wife (this, of course, was necessary if he wanted to have a family, which many Anglo-Saxons appear to have done).

In fact, if you saw an Englishman from the year 1000 walking towards you, the first thing that would strike you was how familiar he would look. For example, his tribal cloak would almost certainly have been made by Paul Smith, and it wouldn't be at all unlikely for him to have a mobile phone secured next to his battle axe. The Anglo-Saxons set great store by communications, and many historians whose names have temporarily escaped us think that William the Conqueror and his generals plotted their strategy at the famous battle of Hastings by a primitive form of video conferencing.

To make the tenth century equivalent of Viagra you took a goat's bladder, dipped it in tar and... (cont. p94)

Books & Bookmen

■ MUCH of the critical acclaim surrounding *Shakespeare in Love* has been heaped upon Tom Stoppard's witty and entertaining screenplay. Stoppard himself has been quick to point out though that the idea was secondhand when he got hold of it, and that the original plot came from Marc Norman, who is credited as co-writer.

A number of older *Eye* readers have pointed out that this "original idea" bears more than a passing resemblance to a 1941 novel by Caryl Brahms and S.J. Simon, *No Bed for Bacon*, now out of print. The novel opens with Shakespeare repeatedly practising his signature, and features as its heroine the rebellious noblewoman Viola Compton, who disguises herself as a man in order to act in the Elizabethan theatre, has a passionate affair with Shakespeare, cures his writer's block, inspires the writing of *Twelfth Night* in which she appears, has the sonnet "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day" written for her, meets Elizabeth I, and is separated from Shakespeare, inspiring him to write *Antony and Cleopatra*.

NEW OLD SAYINGS

Better dead and Ted

Stoppard and Norman's film opens with Shakespeare repeatedly practising his signature, and features as its heroine the rebellious noblewoman Viola de Lesseps, who disguises herself as a man in order to act in the Elizabethan theatre, has a passionate affair with Shakespeare, cures his writer's block, inspires the writing of *Romeo and Juliet* in which she appears, has the sonnet "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day" written for her, meets Elizabeth I, and is separated from Shakespeare, inspiring him to write *Twelfth Night*.

■ WHO says the *Daily Telegraph* has dumbed down? There was a fine piece of arts reporting on the front page the morning after the Whitbread awards.

After recording correctly that the book of the year was won by Ted Hughes' *Birthday Letters*, the report said that "Justin Cartwright's novel, *Leading the Cheers*, a tragicomedy set during the dictatorship of Idi Amin came second. Amanda Foreman's acclaimed first biography, *Georgina, Duchess of Devonshire* was eliminated earlier."

Unfortunately Cartwright's novel is about a high school reunion. A first novel by Giles Foden called *The Last King of Scotland* is about Idi Amin. The books by Cartwright, Foden and Amanda Foreman (called ***Georgiana**, Duchess of Devonshire*) were all shortlisted for the book of the year but were not eliminated at any earlier stage. Oh, and there *is* no second prize.

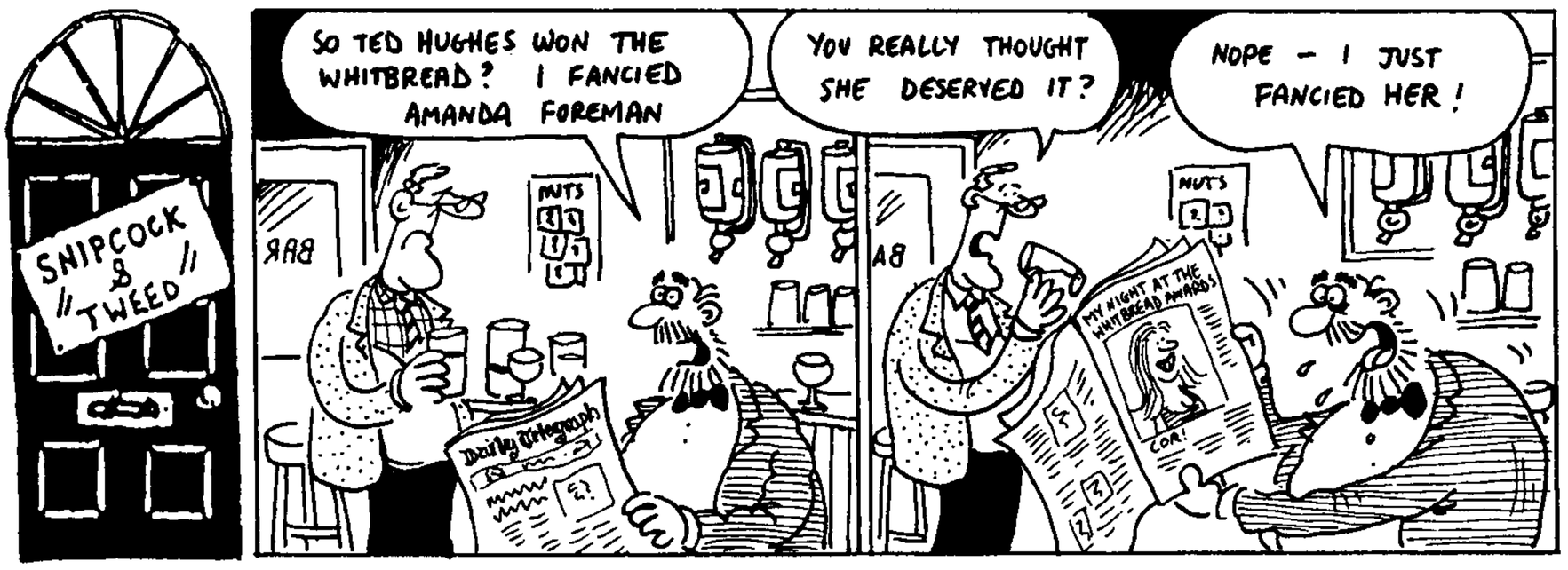
The picture of Hughes' daughter in a décolleté dress was nice though, which is the main thing.

■ WHILE Andrew Morton puts the finishing touches to his memoir of Monica "Mouth Organ" Lewinsky, his recent hagiography of President Daniel Arap Moi has earned him a libel writ from one Richard Kwach, a judge in the Kenyan court of appeal.

Kwach was given the go-ahead to sue last week after claiming that Morton accuses him of being "corrupted" during his investigation of the murder of foreign affairs minister Robert John Ouko.

No doubt Morton will be able to produce a rather more convincing denial of the charge than that offered by Monica's friend Mr Clinton.

'Bookworm'

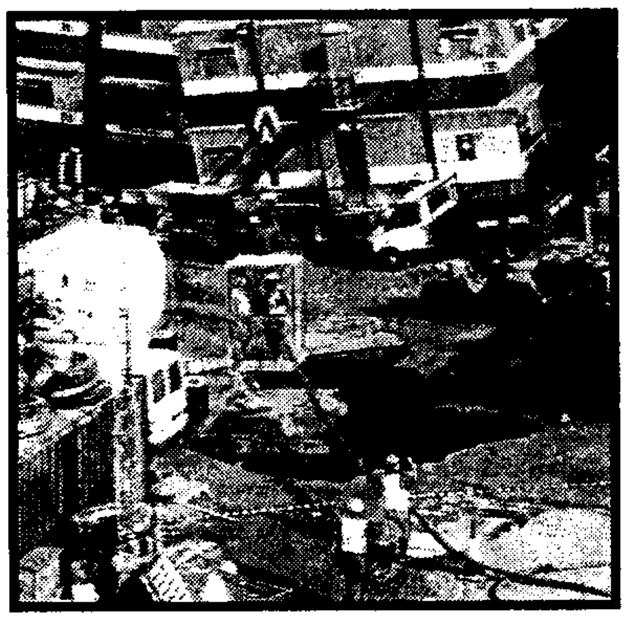

SNIPCOCK & TWEED
SO TED HUGHES WON THE WHITBREAD? I FANCIED AMANDA FOREMAN
YOU REALLY THOUGHT SHE DESERVED IT?
NOPE - I JUST FANCIED HER!
BAR
NUTS
Daily Telegraph
MY NIGHT AT THE WHITBREAD AWARDS
COR!

footnotes

MASTER BATES COMES AGAIN

THE government took a long time to come up with the perfect businessman to chair London Transport, but at last on 20 January they named him. He is Sir Malcolm Bates, whom *Eye* readers will recall as the country's leading genius behind PFI, which stands for "private finance initiative".

Sir Malcolm was a member of the last Tory government's energy deregulation taskforce and private finance panel, which encouraged more private finance and control of public projects such as hospitals. So delighted was the new Labour government with his record that he was hired at once to advise on specific PFI projects, especially in the national health service.



HEATHROW HOLE: Tunnel collapse, 1994

Bates's big NHS triumph was his supervision of PFI at one of the country's oldest and most famous hospitals, the Edinburgh Royal. Under this scheme a private consortium, led by the huge multinational BICC plc and its construction subsidiary Balfour Beatty, gets four plum city centre sites for development in exchange for being paid handsomely by the taxpayer to build a new hospital outside the city centre which the consortium will eventually own. This scheme was a tremendous boost for BICC plc. And hardly was the ink dry on Malcolm Bates's exciting plan than he joined the board of... BICC plc.

Sir Malcolm was duly knighted in the new year honours. Obviously there was no one in the country more qualified to supervise "new" Labour's biggest and most exciting PFI project, the so-called PPP, whereby control of London Underground will effectively be handed to a private consortium. The government press release on 20 January announcing Sir Malcolm's appointment as one-day-a-week London Transport chairman listed many of his current business interests (chairman of Pearl; director of Premier Farnell) but made no reference to his directorship of BICC plc. On 26 January the *Eye* checked with BICC, where a spokeswoman said: "Yes, Sir Malcolm is a non-executive director."

London Underground then confirmed that one of its biggest contractors is, er, Balfour Beatty, subsidiary of BICC plc. Moreover, in the very week of Sir Malcolm's appointment a long court case started in London. The prosecutor is the health and safety executive (HSE) and the two defendants are an Austrian tunnelling company called PO Consult, and Balfour Beatty Civil Engineering Ltd. The charges accuse both companies of endangering the health and safety of their workers and the general public by the methods they used in building a tunnel for the Heathrow Express.

On 20 October 1994 the tunnel dramatically collapsed near Heathrow airport. Mercifully no one was killed, but the HSE regards this as one of the most dangerous construction accidents in modern times and holds both firms responsible. PO Consult, who devised the tunnelling system, is pleading not guilty. Balfour Beatty Civil Engineering Ltd is pleading guilty.

What has this got to do with London Transport? Quite a lot. The Austrian tunnelling system used at Heathrow is strikingly similar to that chosen by London Underground for its much-vaunted Jubilee Line extension. So shocked were LT bosses by the Heathrow horror that they delayed the entire Jubilee line extension for six months while they modified the tunnelling system. The delays which followed, and the possibility that the line may not reach the Greenwich dome in time for its opening, can largely be blamed on the Heathrow disaster in which Balfour Beatty played such a vital and guilty role.

How was the new London Transport chairman going to cope with the fact that he was on the board of one of LT's biggest contractors? Was he going to negotiate contracts with himself? And was he really going to take office in February when his company had just been convicted of a part in a construction disaster which had caused such havoc at London Transport's greatest pride and joy?

The *Eye* asked the department of the environment, transport and regions and London Transport these questions on 26 and 27 January. The initial answer was: "We didn't know he was a director of BICC." This changed the following day to: "He has resigned from the board of BICC." Asked when he did so, a spokeswoman replied, again after some delay: "His letter of resignation arrived on Wednesday [27 January]. So he wrote his resignation long before he takes office next month." Asked why his resignation from such a relevant multinational had not been mentioned in the press releas', the spokeswoman could not help.

Down the Tube

WHEN the Tory government announced on 25 February 1997 that they were going to privatise London Underground, a terrific hullabaloo was set up by London Labour MPs about secret consultancy payments.

"How much money has the secretary of state set aside for financial and technical advice?" demanded Margaret Hodge (Barking). Kate Hoey (Vauxhall) wanted "a categorical assurance that between now and the general election not a penny of government money will be spent on advisers, consultants and on all the trappings of even starting to look at the scheme".

In the Lords Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean was specially anxious the government shouldn't duck behind the usual secrecy screens. "Will the government," she asked on 17 March 1997, "be in a position to waive the usual commercial-in-confidence rule and give the House details of how much advice on privatisation has cost the government?"

No reply came from the Tory government, which was flung out a few days later.

Then in March last year came a "new" Labour government plan for a "private/public partnership" of the tube. One Lib Dem MP actually asked out loud how much had been spent on which consultancies.

The reply came from Glenda Jackson, Labour's transport minister, on 13 January. In the 10 months since last March... £9.85m.

Who were the lucky firms? That information, said Ms Jackson, was "impossible to give". Why? "Commercial confidentiality."

PS. Hodge, Hoey and Symons are all government ministers.

ARTHUR ANDERSEN: SAVE THE WALES

THE strong bonds which tie the government to the accounting firm Arthur Andersen are under some strain since the resignation of paymaster-general Geoffrey Robinson.

But the Treasury says there is no threat to their Council of Economic Advisers which consists almost entirely of Chris Wales, the former Arthur Andersen tax expert.

In the summer of 1997, Wales was taken on at the treasury mainly as a special adviser to Robinson on tax matters. Before the election, he headed up the team of Arthur Andersen accountants who went round the City drumming up support for Labour.

Wales was involved in Arthur Andersen's Oxford 1996 training courses for Labour frontbenchers, in which at least 100 of Labour's finest were taught the rudiments of good government. And he led the team which advised Gordon Brown, Geoffrey Robinson and the rest of Labour's treasury team on tax policy. This work was paid for by the Smith Political Economy Unit, Gordon Brown's think tank which was financed by Robinson.

If Wales stays at the treasury, he will no doubt be asked for his views on the continuing government inquiry into Robert Maxwell's former empire. Officials at the department of trade and industry are still trying to unravel the curious story of the sale of two companies by Maxwell's Hollis Industries. The companies ended up in the ownership of Transtec, whose two main shareholders were Robert Maxwell and Geoffrey Robinson.

All the documents about these transactions are held by the receivers of the Maxwell empire... Arthur Andersen.

The DTI is not the only government department racked by arguments over Andersen's. At the department of social security officials are increasingly worried by the delays and estimates in paying out pensions. Most of the delays have been caused by difficulties with the NIERS2 computer. The contractor who supplied the computer is Andersen Consulting, a sister organisation to Arthur Andersen.

PS: Many of the responsibilities of the former paymaster-general have passed on to the new economic secretary to the treasury, Patricia Hewitt. Before the election she was head of research at, er, Andersen Consulting.

LIBS SERVICE

FOUR LIBS GONE: Lester, Maclennan, Carlile, Alton

WHAT has happened to the People's Trust, launched with such verve in 1996 as a new popular think tank? The brains and money behind the project came from Harrods boss Mohamed Fayed, and the trustees were drawn mainly from the Liberal Democrat party.

A prime mover in the old days before the Trust was formed was Lib Dem peer Lord Lester QC. Robert Maclennan MP was also involved at an early stage. Two Lib Dem MPs — Alex Carlile and David (now Lord) Alton — were on the board. All these shared with Fayed an enthusiasm for devolution and proportional representation.

Professor Bob Nobay, a famous economist, was chairman at one time, as was Andrew Neil, former *Sunday Times* editor. A past executive director was Christopher Graffius, a former researcher to David Alton and a high Catholic. None of these famous men are on the Trust board any longer.

The Trust director is accountant Robert Fallowfield, who is based at Fayed's Liberty Press. He tells the *Eye* that Alton and Carlile resigned from the board last year. "We had a meeting a week or so ago," he says, "at which it was agreed that the board would be reconstituted while we consider how the Trust should move forward." Andrew Neil, Prof. Nobay and the celebrated PR expert Brian Basham, left the Trust. Only Mr Fallowfield and a solicitor are left.

One man worried by these developments is Frank Wheeler, the retired busman who in 1996 won a determination from the pensions ombudsman that the £168m surplus in the pension fund of the old National Bus company had been illegally swiped by the government. The trustees of the fund are now trying to get the money back from the government.

As *Eye* readers know, the government-appointed trustees, the official solicitor and his lawyers Taylor Joynson Garrett have arrogantly and stubbornly refused to include Frank Wheeler (or Peter Woods, who won a similar case on behalf of the bus company's office workers) in the trustee company.

This time last year Wheeler was casting around for legal help. Out of the blue he got a letter offering help from lawyers for the People's Trust promising him "full legal services".

A case was launched in the chancery court to have Frank Wheeler appointed a trustee. Frank Wheeler has now been told that funds are no longer available. His case continues anyway. He will apply for his costs to be met, as they should be, by the government which stole his pension money in the first place. Mr Fallowfield explains: "We felt that the next stage in the legal case would cost an awful lot of money, and that the pensioners have effectively won."

Meanwhile the argument between the department of transport, whose ministers have promised a "just settlement" for the pensioners, and the treasury, whose ministers can't bear the idea of paying out so much money, continues. Every month another batch of bus pensioners die. Frank Wheeler's old union committee at Blackpool had eight members. Four of them have died since the ombudsman said they were entitled to an increase in pensions which they never had.

There's a worm at the bottom of my garden and his name is Wiggall

■ A FINDING of gross incompetence against the Office for the Supervision of Solicitors has led to a payment of £1,000 to the son of a man wrongly convicted of the killing of newspaper boy Carl Bridgewater.

In 1984 a senior detective from Manchester, Frank Ridgway, carried out an inquiry into the Bridgewater murder. He asked to see John Wiggall, a solicitor at the ancient Tamworth firm of Argyles. Wiggall had represented Pat Molloy, the carpenter whose signed confession had helped convict him and his three fellow defendants of the Bridgewater murder. Molloy died in prison in 1981.

SON OF PAT: Nick Molloy

Wiggall consulted with his partners and agreed to meet DCS Ridgway. He then broke every rule in the solicitors' code and talked to the officer about conversations with Molloy. In Ridgway's note of the conversation Wiggall is recorded as saying that Molloy admitted his involvement in the murder.

As home office officials later admitted, these comments to Ridgway were crucial in persuading home secretary Kenneth Clarke not to refer the Bridgewater case to the court of appeal in 1993.

When the case eventually got to the appeal court — in the summer of 1997 — Molloy's confession was exposed as a fake, which had been cruelly tricked out of him by police officers. The convictions of all four men, including the dead Molloy, were quashed.

On 18 September 1997, Jim Nichol, solicitor to the Molloy family, wrote to the Office for the Supervision of Solicitors to complain about Wiggall's breach of his dead client's confidence. The OSS passed on the complaint to Wiggall, who replied on 29 October. He did not deny that he had talked to Ridgway about conversations with his client, and protested rather feebly that Molloy's case had died with him.

This did not impress the Molloy family, who point out that Wiggall himself admitted on oath that Molloy's instructions from first to last were that he was completely innocent of the murder. On 20 February 1998 Jim Nichol wrote again to say that this was the most serious breach of confidentiality he had ever come across. On 3 April, John Wiggall died.

Jim Nichol persisted with his complaint, writing on 1 and 26 May and phoning in July and August. On 28 September the OSS at last deigned to apologise for what it called "the inexcusable delay". Jim Nichol sent the case to the legal ombudswoman, Ann Abrahams.

She has just delivered her judgment. "I would have thought," she says, "that any organisation with the slightest instinct for self-preservation would have identified the complaint as one calling for speedy and efficient handling. It received the very opposite... I am quite certain that the extent of the delays at the OSS, exacerbated by their failure to reply to letters and telephone calls, will have added to the distress the family had already suffered during their attempts to clear Mr Molloy's name."

She ordered the OSS to pay £1,000 to Molloy's family and reconsider the original complaint.

High Principals

WIRRAL SACKED

***EYE* readers will recall the response of education and employment secretary David Blunkett in 1997 when he was begged by local MPs and others to take drastic action over the financial crisis at Wirral Metropolitan College.**

He held a "review" soon after he took office and concluded there was nothing he could do about the college since he was only the secretary of state. His decision had nothing to do with the fact that he had just appointed Wirral college principal Jenny Shackleton to his taskforce on welfare-to-work.

Now Shackleton has resigned (*Eye* 967) and it seems there *is* something Blunkett can do. He can sack the entire governing body. This is what he is recommended to do by the Further Education Funding Council, which announced on 28 January that the college's affairs have been "mismanaged".

Before Blunkett could sack the governors, however, they all held up their hands and resigned.

LORD TAVERNOR

PETER TAVERNOR, principal of the huge Manchester College of Arts and Technology, is a pillar of "new" Labour in Moston, and was said to be sick as a parrot when he failed to get nominated for the safe seat of Manchester Blackley.

He is polishing up his "new" Labour credentials in the usual fashion: by sacking staff and smashing their union. Sick of serial sackings without proper notice, with minimum redundancy pay and a refusal by Tavernor even to negotiate, MANCAT lecturers finally voted by a clear majority to go on strike for one day on 14 January. Banned from the premises and noticeboards, officials of the union NATFHE were reduced to giving out strike leaflets outside the college.

Two of them, Geoff Brown and Aly McIntyre, were doing just that when Tavernor rushed up to them and denounced them for "illegal picketing and restraint of trade". The next day Brown got a letter from Tavernor issuing a "second warning in connection with unauthorised/legal activities". A third warning, he was told, would amount to a charge of "gross misconduct".

The letter helped ensure that the strike was well-supported — and there was another one, just as solid, on 29 January. The enraged principal has decided to close down a unit for teaching trade union education studies at Stockport. This has brought the TUC into the dispute. The chairman of the college governors, Maurice Littlewood, is not amused. He is the proud holder of a TUC gold badge.

You can write to Paul Foot at Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG, or leave a message for him on 0171 287 3183

In the City

THE LATEST fiscal health bulletins from inside the business empire of grinning pullover and balloonist extraordinaire Richard Branson do little to alter the growing Virgin reputation for too much profitless prosperity and financial engineering.

Recent weeks have seen the accounts to January 1998 from three investment holding companies in the Virgin pyramid. Two of the three at least reveal million-plus profits. But more interesting, or possibly frightening, are the figures for inter-company debt which reveal the unusual way even for a private company in which much of the Virgin empire is financed — out of cash flow.

Top of this particular Virgin food chain is Virgin Voyager, controlled like everything else via the British Virgin Islands by Branson family trusts in the somewhat nearer Channel Islands.

After paying interest of £8m, largely to other Virgin companies, Virgin Voyager produced a loss increased from £3.6m to £4.3m. Its accumulated losses are now almost £13m.

But more indicative of the Branson way of business-building is the balance sheet which lists investments valued at £91m. These include the subsidiaries Virgin Group, Virgin Management, Virgin Enterprises, Voyager Group and our bearded hero's BVI hideaway Necker island.

These and other Virgin companies are shown as owing Virgin Voyager £48m. Virgin Voyager in turn owes them and other group companies a mere £97m leaving the company with net current liabilities of almost £45m, fortunately for the loss-making company owed inter-group.

Delve into the next layer — Virgin Group, owner of Virgin Management and Virgin Enterprises — and more financial oddities appear. The company is profitable — £1.2m last year — but this is after accumulating losses of £77m. No doubt influenced by the fact that its investments, which cost £96m, have been written down by £62m. The present value is £41m.

Finally there is Voyager Group, owner of Necker island, Heaven (Branson's underneath-the-arches London venue for dancing queens) plus Virgin Vouchers and Virgin Ultimate. This too is profitable — a slightly higher £4.4m last year. But once again it is the balance sheet which attracts attention. Voyager Group is owed no less than £130m by other group companies while it owes them a more modest £39m.

Now a balance sheet is only ever a once-a-year snapshot of what the company numbers were on a given day, not the day before or a day later. But this picture of huge inter-company lending makes fuzzy the outline of the Virgin finances. What happens if one of the heavily indebted group companies is unable to repay when required? What happens if the Virgin Atlantic airline, Virgin holidays and Virgin stores profit engine stalls, removing the cash flow essential for such massive inter-group lending? And that is without considering what happens the next time the bearded wonder falls to earth!

PETER MANDELSON's sudden decision to sell his Notting Hill bijou residence and repay his generous benefactor, the Geoffrey Robinson Building Society, raises some intriguing and potentially taxing questions for the society's founder.

Did he "encourage" Mandelson to repay the unsecured loan thereby triggering the sale of the house his friend so dearly wanted as there was no other way to repay? It has never been made clear when or if Robinson could call for repayment, only that he could give notice of wanting to take a charge on the property as security.

Was the sale to head off any possibly expensive or embarrassing inquiries from the taxman about how and why the loan was made which could produce a substantial five-figure tax bill for Mandelson? He may have forgotten to mention the loan on his self-assessment tax return last year — as he forgot to tell the Britannia building society about it. If the initial £373,000 loan was considered a "perk" from being an MP, then he could be taxed at 40 percent on the full notional annual 8 percent interest cost.

Might the taxman also be interested in whether the £373,000 came indirectly or even directly from the offshore Orion Trust of the Guernsey Family Robinson and whether this may have been another of the appropriately named former paymaster-general's "suggestions" to the independent trustees?

If it is indeed Robinson who is repaid the £330,000 outstanding on the loan — which may or may not have been made from one of the several tax free cash distributions he has received from the offshore trust — plus two years' interest, which could add a further £40,000 plus, then he will now face a 40 percent tax bill on the interest. Not perhaps what he expected. But then it was never clear to tax experts why Robinson should have made such a loan with interest rolled-up to repayment when this was certain to mean a large one-off tax bill as and when the loan. was repaid. Especially if he had received the money tax-free.

But then perhaps the money is going back to Orion, which appears to have helped fund so much of the former treasury minister's generosity and has no such UK tax problems. Its income remains tax free. One more question Robinson is unlikely to answer — in public at least until his threatened memoirs. Maybe another reason for obtaining the money ahead of cutting his links to all those Labour ingrates.

FEBRUARY is expected to be decision time for the phoney pharaoh Mohamed Fayed on the vexing issue of his wish for a British passport. Traditionally such applications are ruled on by the home office during the month and communicated before the end of March.

Given the events of the last 18 months — allegations of royal and MI6 murder plots, accusations of bugging, sexual harassment and corruption, plus the little matter of arrest by Scotland Yard — it might be thought the decision will not occupy too much of home secretary Jack Straw's time. Particularly as Fayed holds no known markers on Labour and Straw intends to introduce a "Fayed Law" making the "bunging" of MPs a criminal offence. The pharaoh's curses will be as nothing to the uproar should he be "rewarded" with British citizenship after a litany of deeds which take him way off the bottom of the "fit and proper" scale.

All of which may explain the pharaoh's latest intemperate attacks on British TV and Irish radio against the royals. There is nothing left to lose... only his marbles.

THE sudden collapse of the Sears board when faced with an increased bid from Philip Green precluded any mud-slinging during what was expected to be a drawn out hostile battle. But despite this unexpected development, the coverage of *Sunday Business*, owned by Green's backers and Monaco neighbours, the Barclay brothers, did not disappoint as the last *Eye* forecast.

A fulsome tribute to Mr Low Rent duly appeared the following Sunday (24 January). It omitted all the colourful background noted in the *Eye*. Instead it compared Green to another City outsider, legendary fifties tycoon Charles Clore, who took over the original Sears and built it into an empire squandered by his incompetent successors. The only similarity is that both men went offshore to avoid tax.

But then the paean of praise was written by none other than Green's old chum and longtime booster Jeff Randall, the editor of *Sunday Business*.

CREDITORS of ex-bankrupt Roger Levitt are puzzled how "Dodger" has managed to find the $1.4m he appears to be about to lose in his bid to stage the heavyweight "battle of the aged" between former champions George Foreman and Larry Holmes. Surely it isn't his own money — money he denied having?

Spotting Levitt for the conman he is, both boxers insisted on a 10 percent non-refundable deposit before signing for the fight which was due to take place in Houston on 23 January. Two weeks before the bell rang the fight was "postponed". It is now possibly on for 27 March — if "Dodger" comes up with the rest of the $14m-$10m for Foreman and $4m for Holmes.

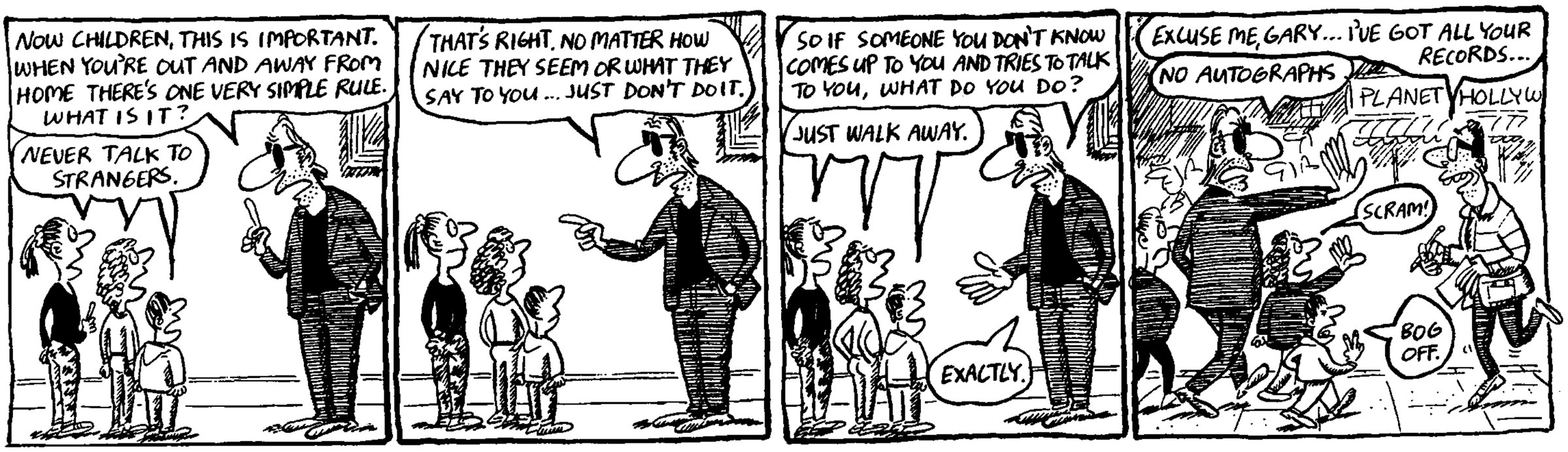
Those who have done business with Levitt will find the words of George's brother Roy all too familiar. "They were supposed to have the money last week and they didn't have it. George gave them an extra week and they still didn't have it." The "very optimistic" Levitt had been persistent promising letters of credit for the purses. The fighters — combined age 99 — are still waiting.

All of which raises the question as to whether the "thoroughly dishonest" Levitt has found a new $1.4m fool who is also now waiting for their money. Join the club.

'Slicker'

Celeb

LIGGER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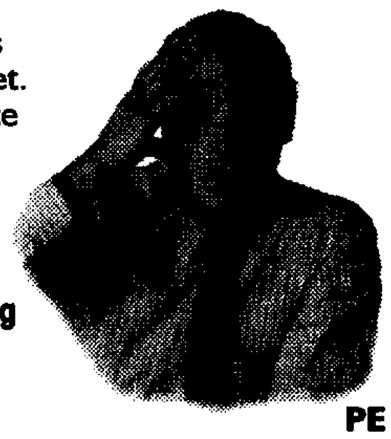

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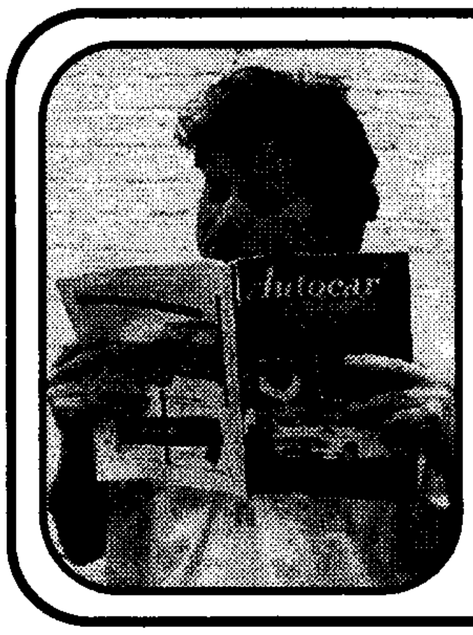

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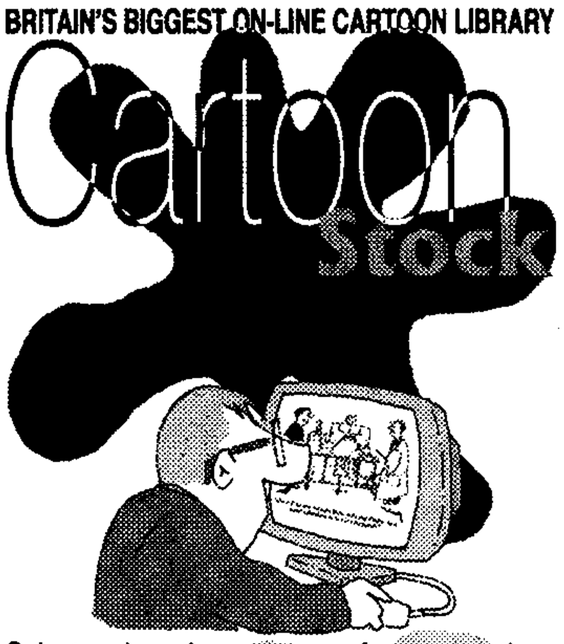

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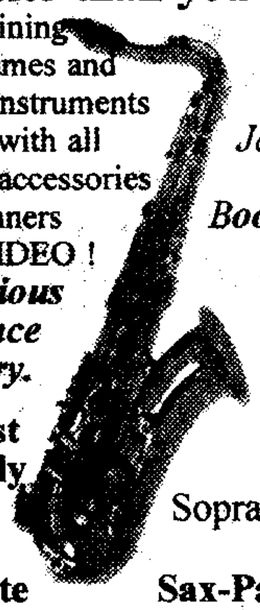

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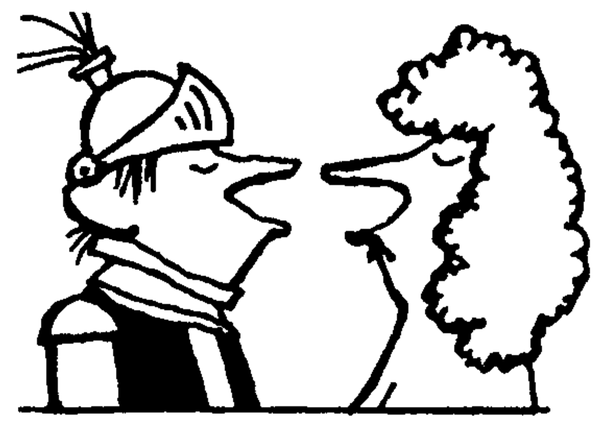

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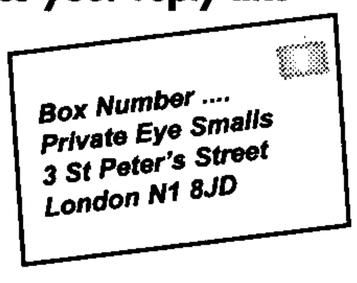

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need money
for house alterations.
Lloyds 30-14-60
0319172

TRAPPED in abusive relationship. Fragile woman, almost broken, no means to escape – desperately seeks help. NatWest 60-16-39, 12920673.

MEDICAL STUDENT needs help to complete studies. Anything gratefully received. Barclays 20-96-89, 40239399. Many thanks.

TALENTED FILM SCHOOL graduate, needs £6000 to clear overdraft and make fresh start. Abbey 09-01-26, 238 89078.

DESPERATE MUM AND DAD need £6,500 for autistic son's (5 yrs) home education programme. Please help! Grateful thanks, Barclays 20-16-99, 60464104.

NICHE MARCHET Bio-Med company with innovative products requires financial input for marketing and new product development. Venture capitalists need not apply. Ph/fax 0345 697722. E-mail artltd@cix.co.uk

YOUNG MAN desperate for operation on facial disfigurement, needs cash. Anything greatly appreciated. MIDLAND 42281538, 40-47-79.

RESCUE MY PREGNANT Moroccan wife from a life of begging in Africa, and the stars will also shine for you. A/c 36-98-10-74, Bank of Ireland, Dunmanway, Co. Cork, EIRE.

DOUBLE REDUNDANCY, baby on way. Need £5000+ to keep flat. Thankyou. Midland 40-20-32, 61200747. Box 1569.

SCIENTIST, proven track record, £20K to finish ecological building project quickly. Endless funding proposals blocked by vested interests. Nationwide 07-00-30, 8111-1123 OR (01568) 780868.

PLEASE HELP! Eye need to raise £2,000 for charity bike ride. Call Josh 01703 331551.

GIVE US A BREAK – gospel singer needs £6000 for debut album. Thanks from a grateful heart. Box 1669.

FOR THREE YEARS I have encouraged a homeless reject toward education, but am now out of funds and the cupboard is bare. Please help with cash or cheap loan. Details: Box 1769.

FEMALE UNDERGRADUATE 22, desperate. Last resort before escort agencies – don't want to do it. Please help. NatWest 60-18-11, 45335656.

HELP! House falling down around our ears. Can't afford to move or stay. £8,500 needed. Anything gratefully received – First Direct 40-47-81, 30264849.

EYE FLY

FLIGHT OPTIONS – telephone booking service. Tel: 01432 851062, Fax: 01432 850722, HENRY ROGERS, ATOL 3793.

CONSULT THE ORACLE! Affordable travel expertly predicted! Fully bonded. Tel/Fax: 01904 608941. www.speartravels.co.uk

WORLDWIDE LOWEST prices allegedly! Tel: 01942 603599 / 680268. Fax: 01942 670868. Agents ATOL holders.

EYE SKI

SKI IN COURCHEVEL,
VAL D'ISERE, LA TANIA.
Catered chalets, superb food, wine,
our own Le Ski School and crèche.
LE SKI
01484 548996
ATOL 2307 AITO

EYE-CLIPSE!

TOTAL ECLIPSE ZONE August 11th 1999 – camp in our field. Panoramic views from Dartmoor to Torbay. Phone for details: 01548 821610.

CAMPING AT LOWER NUMPHRA Farm for the 1999 ECLIPSE. On the centreline of totality near Land's End. Ring 01736 788699.

EYE ESCAPE

LEARN SCUBA in historic Sicily, late June. Private trip – Interested? Call MIKE 0181 847 1979 (evenings).

YOUR VERY OWN PUB in the Highlands of Scotland for Millennium!! Plus accommodation in a new bunk house just adjacent. Bunk House sleeps 36 in a variety of room styles all ensuite. Pub can easily hold 100 plus or seventy seated for meal. Three day four night package includes Ceilidh Hogmanay, whisky tastings, beer sampling, a host of outdoor activities and much, much more! Contact Nigel Reid, THE OLD BRIDGE INN, Aviemore, 01479 811137.

WRITING HOLIDAYS Lanzarote – villa small group poolside sessions. Brochure: Tel/Fax 01475 674099.

SOUTHERN TUSCANY – wildly romantic apartment to let in idyllic village – 0171 607 1495.

THE FULL MONTE VIDEO. Tailormade escorted groups tours plus scheduled flights to Latin America. JOURNEY LATIN AMERICA. Fully bonded. ATOL, AITO. Tel: 0181 747 8315.

BRUGES / ARDENNES.
Historic towns, superb scenery on 7 berth Dutch Barge with crew. Self-catering – reasonable rates.
Call 01484 536257.

WEST CORNWALL– cottage on coastal farm with uninterrupted sea views. Sleeps four. 01736 762340.

SOUTH AMERICA FEB 1999. Four-wheel drive adventure from Rio carnival to Lima; visiting Iguassu Falls, Machu Picchu and much more. Other departures throughout the year. OVERLAND LATIN AMERICA 01926 311 332.

SOUTH INDIA
rented house
INSPIRATIONAL TOURS!
Tel/Fax: 01223 573707.
TTA R6013.

COTSWOLD GLIDING CLUB – 5-day holiday courses inclusive of all flying and instruction. Prices from £285. Tel: 01285 760415 for brochure.

MURDER WEEKENDS and other ideas. WWW.Mayhem.org.uk. Telephone 0181 959 6579 for brochure.

EYE BET

CASINO BLACKJACK – with PROJECT21. Infopack 01344 780259.

INSIDER INFORMATION available from very successful gambling stable – 0976 730979.

EYE CONTACT

LUNCH IS OK is just an hour lunch is – OnlyLunch – introductions for busy professionals 0800 908 900.

BEAUTIFUL RUSSIAN LADIES – personal introductions – exclusive contacts. OLGA EDWARDS, PO Box 56, Hyde, Cheshire. 0161 355 6841 (24 hrs).

MAKE FRIENDS IN AMERICA! Pen pal club with thousands of members wants you! Free details: TRANSATLANTIC PEN FRIENDS, Box 2188-PE, San Pedro, California 90731, U.S.A.

'ADULT CHATLINE', girls 18+, women on-line, message exchange, calls cost 60p per min, JCG, BN22 8pw, 0640 611688.

www.adcdating.co.uk – Free ads.

CONFIDENTIAL, AFFORDABLE MAIL BOX.
0121 328 2878
(Birmingham).

MARGARET'S special PEN CLUB –new friends UK/overseas. SAE: PO Box 1, Prestwick, Ayrshire KA9 1RJ. Est. 1986.

FILIPINO ORIENTAL ANGLO Social Club – UK intros, parties & events – Martin/Marlene – 0800 052 9551 / 01493 300063 / 308514.

DISCREET PENPALS – articulate, naughty, home town ladies seek interesting gentlemen. 2x26p stamps: EPPS, PO Box 36, Dartford, DA2 7ZU.

'SINGLE GIRLS 18+' fun women want to chat to men, message exchange, CRS/11 TN21 0XB, Calls cost 60p per min, 08901 292374.

THAI CONNECTIONS – free brochure, video £15. 43 Trowbridge Gardens, Luton, LU2 7JY. 01582 481725.

BEAUTIFUL ORIENTAL LADIES
Seek UK gentlemen of all ages.
Romance, Holidays, Marriage.
Loyal, caring,
English speaking, feminine
MEET IN THE U.K. or
Japan, Malaysia, Philippines,
Indonesia, Thailand, China etc...
Large s.a.e. for photo's/profiles:
ASIA-UK FRIENDSHIP CLUB
59/60, Derby Sq., I.o.M. IM1 3LP

PLUMP PARTNERS – National Dating Agency. If you are plump or prefer a plump partner – ring 01352 715909.

'CONTACT CHATLINE' woman, girls 18+ willing to chat to men, message exchange. SUP/98 BN3 3RU, calls cost 60p per min, 0640 644026.

ADULT PARTIES and events. Nationwide and local contacts – 01582 750947, PO Box 2097, Luton, LU3 2ZT. www.club-aphrodite.com

PERSON TO PERSON – best singles magazine for friends / partners, U.K. or overseas. FREE DETAILS (Dept PE/8) P.O. Box 4, Goring-on-Thames, RG8 9DN.

ATTACHED? Seeking romance? Call David at LOVING LINKS for a friendly chat on 0171 460 7486 / 0181 962 6300. Our information available by fax retrieval on 09093 919291 (£1 per/min) and on our 24 hr info line 0906 550 1361 (£1 per/min). We are EVERYTHING you imagine us to be.

ADDITIONS – Attached? Yet need a loving friend? Nationwide newsletter – 0181 905 3304, 0181 958 9657. Total discretion assured (no computers used). Featured on ITV, American TV, BBC, Radios 4/5. Established 1992.

HEDONISM PARTIES, clubnights, holidays. Decadent, uninhibited, exhibitionist, fun-loving party animals. Singles, couples. S.a.e. PO Box 153, Greenford, UB6 8LY. 0181 575 2052.

BEAUTIFUL THAI LADIES – colour brochure SIAM INTRODUCTIONS (established 13 years) – 01689 860880.

AMAZINGLY ALLURING irresistible Thai ladies w.l.t.m. sincere unattached British Gentleman. Free colour brochure. Thai Princess Introductions. Tel 01562 748600 (24hrs) – info@thai-princess-in.demon.co.uk

COVENT GARDEN Singles Drinks Parties. Every Thursday £15. Every Saturday £20. Ages 30-50. Free Brochure. 0171 836 3070.

EYE LOVE

STYLISH, SLIM but curvy, coltish, interesting woman, early 40's, leggy 5'6" needs local (not London) N/S lover – rich in level of consciousness and intimacy, desire and (com)passion. High E.Q. Kent/Surrey. Box 3869.

ATTRACTIVE, 24, FIT, seeking the good looking vibrant woman that's missing. Photo gets reply. Box 1869.

MARRIED LADY, (50) seeks similar for friendship and possible close encounter. Box 1969.

PRETTY LADY needs spoiling and pampering in 1999. Any offers? 07931 987272. Box 2069.

TALL, GENTLE, N/S prof male, 50, currently wed, longs to re-ignite life's flame before 2000 with slim 1950's mum who craves appreciation, lunches and short trips. London or West. Box 0768.

OK – I ADORE BOSSY women. You like girlish wimps! Educated bachelor (50's) awaits your pleasure. South. Box 1867.

SINCERE, REFINED and childlike lady, 42, seeks an attentive and trustworthy gentle man (45-55) to 'LOVE' and challenge, to protect and soothe. (Interests: classical music, occasional dancing. London Box 2068.

LET'S PAIR UP – 2 straight, handsome males, late 30's, with youthful looks and personalities to match, wish to meet 2 females for fun evenings out in London. Photos ensure reply. Box 3569.

MALE – SEXY, attractive, 36 years of age professional, in London twice a week, wishes to meet sexy attractive lady up to 50, for discreet liaisons, champagne and pampering. Box 2269.

OFFERS INVITED: attractive 1950's property, sadly neglected, seeks tall, sexy, semi-deteched man, accessible M62. Box 2369.

CARING, TALL, SLIM attractive, professional man, late 30's, non-smoker, GSOH. Into food, music, travel, tennis, ski-ing, outdoor pursuits – seeks similar female, 25-35, as soulmate. Photo appreciated. S.E. Hants/W.Sussex. Box 2469.

TOM CAT with nine tails, seeks girl with one tail – for leg pulling. Box 2569.

DOES MY FEMALE counterpart exist? Businessman mid forties, attached, happy, sporty, sophisticated, sensual – would like to meet a similar woman for a single (important) discreet, regular, happy, erotic, and sensual relationship. Enjoy wining/dining. Box 2769.

POSITIVE, CONSIDERATE, country loving gent with nice SOH. Busy with own business but seeks classic model, both in looks and values, who may be limited in appearances due to existing ties or lifestyle. Box 2869.

SEXY DOCTOR (or similar) wanted for sexy woman (30) of Wiltshire, for sexy holiday and sexy happiness. Box 2969.

ATTACHED MALE, 47, non intellectual but well bred, seeks female for long-term friendship and romance. London/30 mile radius. Box 3169.

AMERICAN GLAMOUR PUSS (23) seeks generous gentleman (35+) to spoil. Discretion assured. Box 3369.

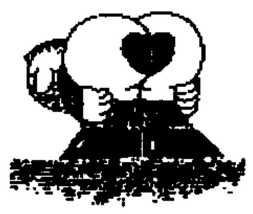
ASSERTIVE UNCONVENTIONAL male, 47, (married) seeks sensuous lady who enjoys foreign travel and caring guidance. Box 3469.

FRUSTRATED GIRL, 20, seeks very intelligent, attractive, educated man. Interests: literature, opera, classics. Box 3669.

FANTASY AT 50, does it exist? Subservient English gentleman wltm a woman in command. Does she exist? Turn fantasy into fact. alchemy@onyxnet.co.uk

ATTRACTIVE LADY seeks ex-pat or similar. Me, young 56, sincere. You, 56+ genuine. Box 3969.

BLONDE ATTRACTIVE slim female lawyer, 29, seeks single city man over 35. Box 3269.



DON'T FORGET YOUR VALENTINE MESSAGE NEXT ISSUE!
(SEE PAGE 31)

- raised £750,00 for the children of Sudan?
- is the Big Issue National Newspaper of the Year?
- is the Plain English Campaign National Newspaper of the Year?
- led the field with it's investigation into Geoffery Robinson's financial affairs?
- campaigned for a better deal for British farmers?
- highlighted the dangers of genetically modified food?
- is the only paper to publish the official list of disqualified company directors?
- explained both sides of the Euro debate without preaching or scaring?
- persuaded the government to act on landmine issues?
- and has recruited the entire (4 strong) Observer investigative team?

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